

Methodological Uncertainties of Research in ELT Education II

Pilar Méndez-Rivera
Editor



Methodological Uncertainties of Research in ELT Education II



UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL
FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE CALDAS



Universidad
del Valle

UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL
FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE CALDAS

UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA
NACIONAL

Methodological Uncertainties of Research in ELT Education II

Pilar Méndez-Rivera

Editor

Énfasis



UD
Editorial



© Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas
© Doctorado Interinstitucional en Educación
© Pilar Méndez Rivera (Editora)

Primera edición, octubre de 2023
ISBN: 978-958-787-634-5
ISBN digital: 978-958-787-635-2

Preparación editorial

Doctorado Interinstitucional en Educación
<http://die.udistrital.edu.co/publicaciones>
Sede Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas
www.udistrital.edu.co
Aduanilla de Paiba, Edificio de Investigadores, calle 13 n.º 31-75

Asistente editorial

Elban Gerardo Roa Díaz
eventosdie@udistrital.edu.co
PBX: (57+1) 3239300, ext.6330

Líder Unidad de Publicaciones

Rubén Eliécer Carvajalino C.

Gestión editorial

Rosa Isabel González Moreno

Corrección de estilo

Editorial UD

Diagramación

Proceditor LTDA.

Editorial UD

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas
Carrera 24 n.º 34-37 Bogotá, D. C., Colombia
Teléfono: 6013239300 ext. 6202
Correo electrónico: publicaciones@udistrital.edu.co

Methodological Uncertainties of research in ELT Education II

Sistema de Bibliotecas de la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas
Catalogación en la publicación (CEP)

Methodological uncertainties of research in ELT Education II / Pilar Méndez Rivera, editora. -- Primera edición. -- Bogotá : Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Doctorado Interinstitucional en Educación (DIE), 2023.
102 páginas ; 24 cm. (Énfasis)

ISBN: 978-958-787-634-5 ISBN digital: 978-958- 787-635-2

1. Inglés -- Investigaciones 2. Inglés -- Estudio y enseñanza 3. Inglés -- Metodología 4. Lenguaje y cultura 5. Educación I. Méndez Rivera, Pilar, editora II. Serie.

428.0071: CDD 21 edición.

Todos los derechos reservados.

Esta obra no puede ser reproducida sin el permiso previo escrito de la Unidad de Publicaciones de la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Hecho en Colombia.

Comité Editorial-CADE

Rodolfo Vergel Causado

Presidenta CADE

William Manuel Mora Penagos

Representante grupos de investigación: Investigación en Didáctica de las Ciencias, Interculturalidad, Ciencia y Tecnología INTERCITEC, GREECE y del Grupo Didáctica de la Química-DIDAQUIM, del Énfasis de Educación en Ciencias.

Juan Carlos Amador Baquiro

Representante de los grupos de investigación: Moralia, Estudios del Discurso, Filosofía y Enseñanza de la Filosofía, Grupo de investigación Interdisciplinaria en Pedagogía de Lenguaje y las Matemáticas-GIIPLyM y Jóvenes, Culturas y Poderes, del Énfasis en Lenguaje y Educación.

Luis Ángel Bohórquez Arenas

Representante de los grupos de investigación Interdisciplinaria en Pedagogía de Lenguaje y las Matemáticas GIIPLyM, Matemáticas Escolares Universidad Distrital-MESCUUD, del Énfasis de Educación Matemática.

Absalón Jiménez Becerra

Representante de los grupos de investigación Formación de Educadores, del énfasis de Historia de la Educación, Pedagogía y Educación Comparada.

Pilar Méndez Rivera

Representante de los grupos de investigación: Aprendizaje y Sociedad de la Información y Formación de Educadores, del Énfasis en ELT EDUCATION.

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

Giovanny Mauricio Tarazona Bermúdez

Rector

Mirna Jirón Popova

Vicerrectora Académica

Comité Editorial-CADE

Isabel Garzón Barragán

Director Nacional

Carlos Ernesto Noguera Ramírez

Director DIE

Universidad Pedagógica Nacional

Rodolfo Vergel Causado

Director DIE

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

Edgar Fernando Gálvez Peña

Director DIE

Universidad del Valle



**UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL
FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE CALDAS**



Contenido

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Preface Restoring Relationality: Committing to Deepening Decolonial Sensibilities in Educational Research | 11 |
| <i>Sarah Amsler</i> | |
| Navigating Uncharted Waters Towards Decolonial Stances in Research | 19 |
| <i>Carmen Helena Guerrero-Nieto</i> | |
| <i>Pilar Méndez-Rivera</i> | |
| <i>Harold Castañeda-Peña</i> | |
| Researching Horizontally: Methodological Assumptions About Observers' Subject Positions | 29 |
| <i>Miguel Martínez Luengas</i> | |
| What Does this Journey Look Like? | 43 |
| <i>Mireya Esther Castañeda Usaquén</i> | |
| Trans-Gressive Uncertainties In approaching Transgender Learner Experiences in ELT Pre-Service Teacher's Formation | 57 |
| <i>Pedro Adolfo Cabrejo Ruiz</i> | |
| Methodological Jigsaw: Out and in the Frames | 69 |
| <i>Yeraldine Aldana Gutiérrez</i> | |
| A Hybrid Approach Toward Teacher Identity Research in the Transnational Nexus | 85 |
| <i>Liu Yi-Fen (Cecilia Liu) 劉怡芬</i> | |
| About the Authors | 99 |

Preface

Restoring Relationality: Committing to Deepening Decolonial Sensibilities in Educational Research

Sarah Amsler

This book offers a window onto the personal and collective journey(s) towards decolonial inquiry of nine English Language Teaching (ELT) researchers of the South, six doctoral students and the three coordinators of their doctoral program in the Interinstitutional Doctorate in Education, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. Here they share their stories of learning what it means not only to question the historical and ongoing violence of modern institutions of epistemic power (especially schools, universities, and academic disciplines) but to recognize, face, and detangle the roots of coloniality in their ways of knowing, relating and being with/in the profession. Their stories shed light on how binary, hierarchical and white supremacist, patriarchal and capitalist logics are conducted and may be defused and rewired through the microfibers of the body, relationships, land and place, the social formation of subjectivity and beingness, and our capacities to perceive, sense and make sense of the living world we belong. In doing so, the stories also gesture towards what requires healing in the wider, “more than human” relationships that are the conditions of possibility for nonviolent collective existence and ask new questions about what forms of inquiry serve this process.

The immensity of this task is enormous. The authors of this book describe it as a process of swimming into “uncharted waters” as they face the complex, unknowable, and uncomfortable necessity of being epistemological and ontologically disobedient not only to professional norms and expectations but to cherished assumptions about knowledge, identity, purpose, truth, and justice.

They also teach us that this experience is both real and illusory, a portal to the foundational place of uncertainty in decolonial sensibility and relations. On the one hand, these stories can be located in conversation with/in a growing field of transnational responses to the crisis of modernity and struggles against the coloniality of Western Europe knowledge and research (in addition to those cited in the book see, for example, Patel, 2016; Stein *et al.*, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith *et al.*, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012). While they are situated on the edges and crevices of institutional and disciplinary knowledge norms in the Colombian academy and are incommensurable with dominant discourses and ontologies of educational reform, efforts to cultivate decolonial sensibilities within modern/colonial academies are not entirely uncharted. On the other hand, the stories recognize and uplift a critical element that is often ignored, denied, or experienced as a problem to be solved in decolonial learning: the inexorable unchartedness or, more precisely, unchartability of being and becoming otherwise; the unimaginable possibilities and accounts of undoing the colonial currency of an entire mode of existence.

The authors of these stories are also learning that, as Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang reminded us in an incisive article ten years ago, decolonization is neither a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools nor a synonym for “any track towards liberation” (Tuck & Yang, 2012). For Tuck and Yang, “decolonization in the settler colonial context much involves the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically” (2012, p. 7). This is not the focus of this book, which emerges from an institutional context in which it is professionally and politically difficult to name even the basic realities that human beings are inseparable from the earth, that the modern/colonial university grew from and lives on the blood of the matrix of colonial domination, and that hegemonic regimes of knowledge are implicated in ongoing biopolitical and geopolitical violence. The stories told here rather plant seeds from which the recognition of these relational realities might begin to grow through embracing epistemic and ontological uncertainty as a ground for disinvesting from nurturing delusions of “settler innocence,” “rescuing settler normalcy” or “rescuing a settler future” in educational research and the politics of academic knowledge more widely (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35). The chapters are presented in autobiographical, autoethnographic, and narrative forms, not to individualize experience but to interrupt dominant logics of disembodiment, objectification, and extraction by valorizing embodied, lived,

and emplaced ways of knowing and research practices. When read together, the stories also extend an invitation for

people to engage educationally with the collective tensions, complexities, and possibilities that... arise at the interface of different critiques, communities and contrasting ontometaphysics, and an example of educator-researchers engaging in practices of showing up differently for decolonizing work, without the common projections, fragilities, and overdetermined expectations. (Stein *et al.*, 2020, p. 47)

The somatic and relational materiality of this work is often silenced in educational theory and research, where the term “decolonize” is also used to refer to disembodied forms of discursive projects such as diversification (of thinkers, syllabi, curricula); digression (from intellectual canons), decentering (of sites of knowledge production); devaluation (of knowledge binaries and hierarchies); disinvestment (from authoritative institutions and “citational power structures”); and strategic diminishment (of hegemonic voices as a way of amplifying subjugated ones) (Appleton, 2019). The stories in this book, however, show how this work is inseparable from struggles against deeper forces of ontological violence, including binarism, monoculturalism, universalization, standardization, objectification, extraction, eurocentrism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, dehumanization and anthropocentrism in English Language Teaching, teacher education and, pedagogical research in Colombia and how the most ordinary of everyday practices is a site for seeing, facing and attempting to interrupt modern-colonial ontologies.

These researchers’ lives have plenty of fields of possibility for this work. They offer detailed examples of how these logics permeate the institutions with various forms of “methodological imprisonment” through the disciplinary and discursive construction of the definitions, methodologies, and systems of research (Guerrero-Nieto *et al.*, this volume). How the normalization and sacralization of “objectivity” dehistoricize and depoliticize the complexities of the body, identity, desire, and relationship. How the assertion of binary categories and ways of being relegates bodies, knowledge, and ways of being to states of non-existence (Martínez-Luengas, this volume). How it disposes of people of their own stories, knowledge, emotions, and ways of doing and being in the world; leaves out from inquiry “the human part, living-being in the community” (Castañeda-Usaquén, this volume). How it “erases gender variabilities... otherness, intersubjectivity, alterity and sameness” (Cabrejo, this volume) and the “multiple and plural how” of life itself (Aldana, this volume). How it destroys our capacity to live in and towards healthy “self-other balance and relatedness” with/in all life (Liu Yi-Fen, this volume). How it creates, in so many ways, a “violent version of our academy”

(Aldana, this volume) and normalizes this ontological and epistemic violence as inevitable, necessary, and desirable.

The authors desire to move beyond critique and deconstruction to interrupt these structures by being otherwise with their communities, students, and selves; but they do not seek simple solutions. They are committed to recognizing the challenges, risks, impurities, and uncertainties of taking a decolonial stance from complex and, in various ways, complicit embodied and geopolitical positionalities. The writing collective speaks from “diverse colonialities” (Aldana, this volume) and prioritizes learning to “think from the recognition of the colonial difference that constitutes us” (Mignolo, 2014, p. 69). For Castañeda-Usaquén, this means learning what questions matter to ask as a Mestiza woman of Asian, European, and Indigenous ancestry who speaks Spanish and studied a career to be an English teacher”. Martínez-Luengas’ concern for undoing hierarchical power relations of surveillance in teacher education orients them towards friendship as a mode of relational reciprocity and commitment. Cabrejo’s transgender locus of enunciation motivates them to “trace back what has been erased about gender variabilities” before Spanish colonization and to activate fluid and plural sensibilities of “otherness, intersubjectivity, alterity, and sameness” in their approach to research. Aldana’s work with peace educators has shown them how important it is to situate the problem of missing voices and ways of being in research within and as inseparable from the visceral horror of missing and murdered leaders and educators in Colombia. Moreover, Liu Yi-Fen’s position as a “transnational teacher” who is influenced by Confucian, European, North American, and Latin American philosophers, theorists, and educators has guided them towards becoming a “feel-thinking” (Borda, 1981) for whom plural ways of knowing, feeling and acting in the service of balance and relatedness are indispensable.

An intention to become intimate with and response-able for the anti-colonial healing force of relationality ultimately grounds and guides this book. Rather than hiding or denying the painful and disorienting complexities that appeared as they began turning to face both their complicity in sustaining deeply rooted relations of colonial harm and the magnitude of the challenge of doing otherwise, these educator-researchers commit to making them visible. In different ways, each describes decoloniality as an embodied geopolitical imperative about which they have much to learn and unlearn, as an ongoing, nonlinear, and inherently interconnected process of deviolentization and reconnecting with respect and care for all relationships. In different ways, rather than collapsing into debilitating individualized despair under the weight of responsibility for interrupting violent historical habits, each seeks to center and seek intimacy with the teachings of uncertainty, indeterminacy, uncertainty, unknowability, impurity, and inseparability in research.

All of this often-unseen and devalued work expands the inquiry here from a narrow frame of how to “decolonize methodology” within an inherently violent institution to a wider one that raises more profound questions about how to enact “non-dehumanizing” ways of generating knowledge that recognizes and serves the regeneration of just and flourishing life. The research collective provides one possible anatomy of some of the epistemological and ontological commitments that make decolonizing discernments in research more possible:

- a commitment to honor the inseparability of “knowing” and “being,” pedagogy and life, theory and practice by recognizing everyday relationships as embodied, historically placed, and geopolitically generative sites of decolonial responsibility, a commitment to co-create both knowledge for human and more-than-human flourishing, and non-hierarchical forms of organizing inquiry that is guided by respect, reciprocity, trust and care to undo deeper binaries from which the modern/colonial illusion of separability from life itself emerges;
- a commitment to center recognition, restoration, and respect for radically relational ways of knowing that deepen intimacy with the wonderful complexity, abundance, and uncertainty of collective co-existence, as well as with the violence of the binary, hierarchical, and supremacist logic that eradicate bodies and lives, ways of knowing and being, and possible futures;
- a commitment to collectively practice epistemic and ontological disobedience to the anti-relational assumptions upon which the state-and-profession-sanctioned field of educational research is constructed by centering affective relations, intergenerational and community storytelling, songs and wisdom, and feel-thinking modes of communication in inquiry;
- a commitment to “name things anew and name new things” (Guerrero-Nieto, Castañeda-Peña and Méndez, this volume) as a way of giving ephemeral form to the life-giving forces, experiences, stories, and possibilities that are rendered invisible, unintelligible, unknowable, and unimaginable in colonial thinking, bodies, and relationships;
- a commitment to interrupting the historical and continuing violence of modern/colonial knowledge norms and institutions by creating modes of inquiry that center and cultivate curiosity about the teachings of impure interconnectedness rather than individualism, hierarchy, or linearity; of complexity, plurality, and multiplicity rather than standardization, universalization, and monoculturalism; and of irreparable differences, tensions

and paradoxes of being rather than methodological problems with certain solutions;

- a commitment to stay with the long-haul and uncertain task of following the many-layered footsteps of coloniality in the frameworks and shadows of our roles, identities, institutions, and deepest ways of knowing, feeling, and being with/in the world.

From these grounded, embodied emplacements in becoming accountable not too abstracted and extractive academic “research problems” but to interrupting the lived colonial histories and situations in which they are involved, the authors provide examples of how “looking for footprints” of coloniality reveals not simple solutions but pathways to restoring radical relationality in knowledge, community, and political-pedagogical life. They stretch beyond cognitively reflecting on practice in mirrors of decolonial theory, within taken-for-granted professional parameters to ask from intimate loci of enunciation in riskier relational practice what it takes and what difference it makes to delink and disinvest from modern/colonial institutions, imaginaries, and sensitivities. They choose not only to face but to practice centering, as Aldana writes, the “suffering, tensions, struggles, fears, prayers, wishes, victories, frustrations, and other emotions” (this volume) that emerge from both colonial violence and struggles to interrupt it; in moments, they stretch toward the realities and teachings of the nonhuman and spiritual world. By sharing their learnings about the interweavings of domination, knowledge, coloniality, healing, and justice with an ethic of accountability to relationship, they invite us to embrace more embodied, relational geopoliticized humility and vulnerability as among the thickest roots of decolonial pedagogy.

References

- Appleton, N. S. (2019, February 4). “Do not decolonize”...if you are not decolonizing: progressive language and planning beyond a hollow academic re-branding. *Critical Ethnic Studies*. <https://www.criticalethnicstudiesjournal.org/blog/2019/1/21/do-not-decolonize-if-you-are-not-decolonizing-alternate-language-to-navigate-desires-for-progressive-academia-6y5sg>
- Giuliano, F., & Berisso, D. (2014). Education and decoloniality: learning to unlearn in order to re-learn. A geopolitical-pedagogical dialogue with Walter Mignolo. *Revista del IICE*, 35, 61-71. <https://doi.org/10.34096/riice.n35.1961>
- Patel, L. (2016). *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*. Routledge.

- Stein, S., Andreotti, V., Susa, R., Amsler, S., Hunt, D., Akenakew, C. Jimmy, E., Cajkova, T., Valley, W., Cardoso, C., Siwek, D., Pitaguary, B., d'Emilia, D., Pataxó, U., Calhoun, B., & Okano, H. (2020). Gesturing towards decolonial futures: Reflections on our learnings thus far. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 4(1), 43-65. <https://doi.org/10.7577/njcie.3518>
- Tuck, E., & Yang, W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigenous, Education and Society*, 1(1), 1-40. <https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf>
- Tuhiwai Smith, L., Tuck, E., & Yang, W. (Eds). (2019). *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View*. Routledge

Navigating Uncharted Waters Towards Decolonial Stances in Research

Carmen Helena Guerrero-Nieto

Pilar Méndez-Rivera

Harold Castañeda-Peña

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

Introduction

Doing research from a decolonial stance is a beautiful and alluring endeavor, particularly when the researcher's spirit is always searching to push the envelope, find ways to subvert the canon, and do things differently. This describes what has happened to us as dissertation advisers in our doctoral program. The initial excitement of starting a new journey (and the unforeseen struggles, tensions, and contradictions to come along the way) has been transformed into countless forms of learning while doing and learning together.

This chapter, which results from a formative research process in which the three of us and our advisees have taken part, will be divided into three main sections. In the first one, we will discuss the meta-analysis of our chapters for the previous book on *Methodological Uncertainties of Research in ELT I* (Castañeda-Peña, 2020) to show what our concerns were at the time. The second part will be devoted to underscoring our epistemological reflexivity as research mentors as we discuss, delve into, and try to make sense of what a decolonial stance would look like. In the last section, we will set out some challenges as we continue navigating these uncharted waters to bring ways of understanding, informing, shaping, and reshaping the field of ELT.

Embracing a Decolonial Stance in Research: Our Initial Concerns

This meta-analysis of the three chapters we published in the first book of this series was conducted to examine the common concerns we had at that moment in time when we started mentoring our first cohort of doctoral students. Among the decisions we made to conduct the research class was to co-teach it. This

meant that the three of us would be in all the classes along with all our students and would teach and mentor them during the sessions (each of us would also meet individually with our advisees). Being able to share this 5-hour weekly space filled with many learnings fueled by the engaging conversations during the classes. This communal experience has, in part, inspired this publication series in which we reflect on our doings trying to figure out how to conduct research from a decolonial stance.

Each of us wrote one chapter: *Methodological Imprisonment of Research in ELT Education: Exploring Complementary Way Out* (Castañeda-Peña, 2020), *Experiencing Uncertainties* (Méndez, 2020) and *ELT Research from the Global South: Uncertainties in a rarely-walked road* (Guerrero-Nieto, 2020). Using the decolonial lens, Castañeda-Peña (2020) took an interest in discussing the nature of research and how we have been groomed into doing it. Méndez (2020) focuses on the “doers” of research, which are, in our case, our doctoral students. Guerrero-Nieto (2020), in her piece, concentrates on examining the role of research in ELT in Colombia. The meta-analysis allowed us to trace two common concerns that we describe below.

Trapped by Canonical Discourses and Ways of Doing Research

The three of us feel that many elements of canonical research still tie us, and it isn't easy to set free. Castañeda-Peña (2020, p. 38) calls it “methodological imprisonment” and describes its consequences on setting the research agendas in ELT globally. A great deal of research conducted in ELT has, traditionally, been based on a set of naturalized beliefs and ideas called “certainties” by Castañeda-Peña (2020, p. 40) and that are passed onto us, ELT researchers of the South, and members of the largely colonized camp, as indisputable truths. For Méndez (2020), this imprisonment expands to our “being and thinking” (p. 60), meaning that the canonical way of doing research has even colonized our very existence and, with it, the way we position ourselves in regards to what truth is and how to go about investigating it. Guerrero-Nieto (2020), in her part, discusses the role of teacher education programs, research agencies, and indexed journals in perpetuating and strengthening practices to keep researchers imprisoned within canonical parameters to conduct research.

This feeling of imprisonment became more apparent as we progressed in our research class and supervised our advisees' projects. More questions than answers started to pop up and positioned us, as mentors, in the challenging role of transforming the discourses of doing research from a decolonial stance into

actual practices. This transition allowed us to see how strong the cell bars were and how deeply rooted, in our skin, the canonical discourses and practices were.

ELT as a “Discipline” Constructed From Canonical Research

Another common initial concern of the three authors is our awareness of how the field of ELT has been constructed, as a discipline, from the results of canonical research, particularly the one produced originally in the United States and the United Kingdom, the countries of the center, to use Kachru’s (1990) concept. This implies that the research agenda, set from outside, dictated the research designs regarded as the most suitable to inform the field and what was considered researchable in ELT. In Guerrero-Nieto’s (2020) words, “such perspectives deal with several matters, including topics of interest, the role of the researchers, the methods to analyze and report data, and the role of participants, among others” (p. 59) to show that the field has had very little room to outgrow those impositions. Méndez (2020) states, “It has, in turn, made us realize that we have supported canonical research in ELT. We have also assumed that certain types of discourses on researching, teaching, and even acting are the natural way of thinking” (p. 59). Her reflection is very much in line with what Phillipson (1992) calls “soldiers of TESOL” where members of the ELT community participate in the hegemonic practices of the field. Castañeda-Peña (2020) calls our attention to the need to “...a discussion of how such imprisonment has turned English Language teaching and learning into a rigid and monolithic practice...” (p. 38), which is a great deal of what we have been doing in our doctoral program during the last four years.

Our awareness of how the field of ELT has been preconceived and prepackaged from the outside posed another challenge: to channel our advisees’ research interests, which stem from their own experiences and mostly with very critical perspectives on the legacies of the field that we have inherited. Part of our task consisted of deconstructing the field, identifying the colonial mechanisms on which it was informed and constructed, and finding ways to challenge them.

As we dealt with these initial concerns, new ones emerged to enrich our endeavors’ views, understandings, and try-outs. In the following section, we will address some of these emerging concerns for which we do not have any definite answer, but points of view to nurturing the conversation about how to do research from a decolonial perspective in ELT.

Setting Free: Our Struggles to Think out of the Box

From the moment we decided to be part of this doctoral program, one of the very few certainties we had, was our motivation to embrace a decolonial stance. Throughout our professional careers, the three of us resisted the canonical agendas of how to do research and what to research about. Castañeda-Peña, for example, has researched gender and its relationship with ELT. Méndez has explored teachers' subjectivities and their struggles as members of unions, and Guerrero-Nieto has devoted part of her research efforts to critically exploring how teachers deal with language policies in Colombia. So, part of the ground was already set to embrace a decolonial stance toward research in ELT. This journey has not been crystal clear but has been tremendously fascinating as we learn, unlearn, and relearn in a constant dialogical relationship with our advisees, the theories, and ourselves.

In this attempt to think out of the box, many aspects, experiences, questions, and conundrums started populating our doings as research teachers and dissertation advisers.

Engaging in Epistemological Reflexivity

As we have pointed out elsewhere (Castañeda-Peña, 2020; Guerrero-Nieto, 2020; Méndez, 2020), epistemological reflexivity became a cornerstone of our work in the research class. Inspired by Vasilachis' (2009) definition of epistemological reflexivity, we adopted the practice of engaging ourselves and our students in a constant dialogue upon every single decision made in the research project and the rationale behind each one. Nothing has been left unexamined. This process ranges from the selection of words to how data will be analyzed and all other aspects in between. It is relevant to state here that as much as we would like to challenge the modern structure of research projects, our freedom cannot (by now) span beyond institutional regulations, which means that we have to comply with the formats adopted by the doctoral program, which in turn are the ones designated and approved by the Ministry of Science and Technology. Therefore, our epistemological reflexivity sometimes hits a wall, and we, as research teachers and dissertation advisors, need to find ways to negotiate the old and the new ways so that the internal consistency of the research project is not jeopardized.

Inner Struggles

For the three of us (and, of course, for our students, too), embracing a decolonial stance does come with many inner struggles. We have all been groomed into qualitative paradigms while pursuing our master's and doctoral degrees. Besides,

the academic culture of publications, conferences, and grants follows the strict IMRAD model mentioned (Guerrero-Nieto, 2020), which implies that approval depends on the observation of this model. So, there we stand, encouraging our doctoral students to think out of the box but at the same think inside the box; challenge the givens in our field but also observe the givens; be daring but not too daring, and so forth. Some of these contradictions emerge from within, but others condition our work from the outside, boil inside ourselves, and push us to reason to weave together research traditions that are faithful to our discourses as decolonial advocates while simultaneously responding to macro structures that demand modern frames.

Recursiveness and Creativity in “Data Collection” Procedures

As stated above, every decision made during the research process has been carefully examined in a search for consistency. We have been reading and conversing about pieces written by decolonial scholars in which they problematize the same act of research and, along with it, many other aspects. We have read and talked about Haber (2011, p. 9) and his idea of the no-methodology as a kind of “undisciplined archeology”; Suárez-Krabbe (2011) problematizing the colonially in anthropological methodologies and ways to contest that; and Ortiz-Ocaña *et al.* (2018) give some guidelines for what they call “decolonial task” (decolonial doing), among many others who have enriched our views on the research. This quest for answers has left us with more uncertainties and questions but, at the same time, has motivated us to search for alternative ways of “collecting data.”

Our students have responded very actively to this challenge and have designed interesting and innovative modes of “data collection.” In this book, Martínez and Castañeda produced their autobiographies to share with their participants and motivate them to write their own. Aldana also found canonical interviews too dry and designed “multimodal encounters” where multiple modes of articulating meaning (videos, songs, drawings, etc.) enrich her conversations with her “participants”; Cabrejo used drawing together as a strategy to engage his participation in a meaningful and honest conversation, and Liu (this volume) conducted small conversations in the teacher launched spiced by aspects of her daily life and her struggles as a transitional teacher.

Although these experiences can be perceived as no new procedures, they were brought to the research class before being tried out with the actual participants with a new attitude and a renewed commitment to being personally

involved and to populate data without being intrusive, disruptive, hegemonic, or extractivist.

Naming Things Anew and Naming New Things

In a captivating conversation between Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Silvia Rivera Cusicanque, she refers to how language ties us and limits our understanding of the world. She claims that translating is not enough but that we do need to find ways to name things anew and name new things (ALICE CES, 2014).

During this process of inviting the decolonial thought into our professional practice as researchers in ELT, and as a result of our conversations, our readings, and the constant epistemological reflexivity we engaged in, led us to find that some of the established terminology used to name Every step of a research project did not suit our needs, our intentions, our expectations, and all in all our epistemologies. We felt, then, the need to name things anew and name new things. The renaming was not a capricious activity for the sake of doing it but rather a conscious and collective process. Hence, the labels matched the complex ways research was thought about and conducted.

Consistent with the decolonial thought, we decided to include the locus of enunciation as a first part of the research design, which allows the researcher to locate themselves geo/body politically, to state upfront where they are standing and what their vantage point is. Having the locus of enunciation as a starting point has given us all, teachers and students, the opportunity to understand where each one is speaking from while at the same time being able to relate to their personal histories and trajectories.

When referring to the “Statement of the problem,” we began to feel that this phrase did not encompass the researcher’s position nor allow them to show a dynamic perspective regarding how they located their research interest. Besides, this phrase seems to respond to a deficit perspective that identifies a problem to solve. We then started to talk about “colonial situations” because a great deal of our commitment in this doctoral program is to contest the coloniality of the field (Pennycook, 1998), which allows us (we hope) to understand where the roots of inequality lay.

Referring to the “participants” has brought us a great deal of struggle because one of the aspects we are clear about is the crucial role “they” play in research. Once again, Vasilachis (2009) has been very inspiring in helping us understand the relationship that must exist between the researcher and the researched (known subject and knowing subject) and try to challenge the asymmetrical power relationships that naturally emerge between the two. We are trying out some names;

Castañeda-Usaquén (this volume) calls them “companions,” Martínez-Luengas (this volume) refers to them as “teammates,” and Aldana (this volume) as “known subjects.” Of course, none of these names go by without rigorous scrutiny that interrogates what the role of a “companion,” “teammate,” or “known subject” entails research-wise and how they will be included in the dissertation.

In terms of “data collection,” some of us have suggested harvesting data (Hubbard and Power, 1999), detaching ourselves from the meaning of just collecting because it deems problematic, in decolonial terms, to act as the individual who only “collects” without being involved in any part of the production of data. Harvesting plays the researcher in a more dialogical, intersubjective, and relational role. Others are using co-constructing data to signal the heterarchical nature of the relationship between the participants in the research, where both research and researched have similar responsibilities, sayings, and decisions in the production of data.

Up to here, we have shown how we are trying to reconfigure the ways of naming the things we are doing so that the names resemble the deep meanings of our activities. We are still waiting to see how these names develop/hold/evolve/die.

Challenges Ahead

Undertaking this formative research class from a decolonial stance has been a fascinating yet unpredictable venture that has meant for us all, teachers and students, a fantastic experience of learning, relearning, and unlearning together while being actively engaged in making sense of decoloniality and how we can incorporate it into our research agendas. This is our fourth year in this project, with many challenges ahead. One aspect that still haunts our thoughts is the “methodology” per se. How do we deal with the “methodology” from a decolonial perspective? Can we think of an alternative, following Kumaravadivelu’s lead of the post-method pedagogy? Is that even possible?

Along with this very relevant concern, the one regarding validity and reliability has enormous weight in the academic community. There is a strong concern for the results and the truth that can be drawn from the “data” and the “data analysis.” Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) have already taken up this task and coined the term trustworthiness to give an account of the rigor of the research process and how the research question is answered. To us, this aspect needs further debate enriched by our epistemological reflexivity.

References

- ALICE CES. (2014, March 12). Talk of the world - Silvia Rivera Cusicanque, & Boaventura de Sousa Santos [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjgHfSrLnpU>
- Castañeda-Peña, H. (2020). Methodological Imprisonment of Research in ELT Education: Exploring complementary ways out. En P. Méndez Rivera, H. Castañeda-Peña, C. H. Guerrero, A. C. Londoño, A. M. Dávila Rubio, J. Z. Posada-Ortiz, E. Y. Lucero Babativa, Y. Samacá Bohórquez, C. A. Arias Cepeda and J. E. Castañeda Trujillo (Eds.), *Methodological Uncertainties of Research in ELT Education I* (pp. 37-46). Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1999). The teacher Research Movement: A decade later. *Educational Research*, 28(7), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1176137>
- Guerrero-Nieto, C. H. (2020). ELT Research from the Global South: Uncertainties in a rarely-walked road. En P. Méndez Rivera, H. Castañeda-Peña, C. H. Guerrero, A. C. Londoño, A. M. Dávila Rubio, J. Z. Posada-Ortiz, E. Y. Lucero Babativa, Y. Samacá Bohórquez, C. A. Arias Cepeda and, J. E. Castañeda Trujillo (Ed.), *Methodological Uncertainties of Research in ELT Education I* (pp. 47-55). Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
- Haber, A. (2011). Payanesa No methodology: Undisciplined Methodology Notes. *Revista Chilena de Antropología*, 23, 9-33. https://www.academia.edu/822398/No_metodolog%C3%ADa_Popayanesa_Comentarios_al_art%C3%ADculo_de_Alejandro_Haber_
- Hubbard, R., & Power, B. (1999). *Living the Questions. A Guide for teacher researchers*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Kachru, B. B. (1990). World Englishes and applied linguistics. *World English*, 9(1), 3-20.
- Méndez, P. (2020). Experiencing Uncertainties. En P. Méndez Rivera, H. Castañeda-Peña, C. H. Guerrero, A. C. Londoño, A. M. Dávila Rubio, J. Z. Posada-Ortiz, E. Y. Lucero Babativa, Y. Samacá Bohórquez, C. A. Arias Cepeda and, J. E. Castañeda Trujillo (Ed.), *Énfasis: Methodological Uncertainties of Research in ELT Education I* (pp. 57-64). District University Francisco José de Caldas.
- Ortiz-Ocaña, A., Arias-López, M., & Conedo, Z. (2018). Other methodology in social, human, and educational research. Decolonial doing is a decolonized process. *FAIA*, 7(30), 173-200.
- Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. Routledge.

- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Suárez-Krabbe, J. (2011). *In reality. Towards Decolonial Research Methodologies. Tabula Rasa*, 14, 183-204. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/tara/n14/n14a08.pdf>
- Vasilachis, De Gialdino I. (2009). Ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(2). <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1299/3163>

Researching Horizontally: Methodological Assumptions About Observers' Subject Positions¹

Miguel Martínez Luengas

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

The ways in which scientific research is involved in the worst excesses of colonialism remain a powerfully remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity.

(Smith, 1999, p.1)

Introduction

The life stories, autobiographical narratives, and the horizontality of the English class observers represent a methodological dynamic in this book chapter. This chapter manifests a reflection that has emerged from a horizontal view. It is seen as breaking power relations between participants as well as the researcher. The participants are part of a team. They discuss, reflect, and negotiate the milestone, experiences, and configurations of the English class observers and their different positions within this practice. There are other ways of doing research. From an ontological perspective, the author shows himself as part of this process and looks for paths to identify the positions of the ELT observers.

.....
1 Doctoral Research project title: "Re-signifying the Subject Positions of the observers: The narrated experiences of ELT class observers in Colombia," Interinstitutional Doctorate in Education, FJDC District University.

Self-Professional Portrait

It was a TV show called “The Big Brother.” The show was a reality game where participants lived together in a particularly built space isolated from the outside world. Contestants are monitored/observed by live cameras and audio microphones during their stay in the space. I think many people have watched this TV show, and it has impacted the entertainment industry as a competitive game among people interacting and living together.

This chapter highlighted a well-known TV show since it is part of my professional experience as a Colombian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher, trainer, observed teacher, and observer. I have been continuously observed during my academic / work life for a long time. I was observed in my practicum in the B.Ed. in languages program; also, I have been observed in the EFL classes I teach now, and, finally, I have been working as an observer as part of one of the strategies of the Ministry of Education in Colombia about providing observations of English Language teachers at Public Schools in Colombia to improve quality standards in EFL classes. The classroom observations have been manifested in my academic/ working experiences.

I observe EFL teachers’ classes to identify patterns, assess a process, give feedback, or reflect on teaching practices. I have been immersed in classroom observation practices for some time, and I would like to explore this further during my Ph.D. studies. However, I would like to address it from a different angle, *i.e.*, concerning the person who observes the observers’ feelings, negotiations, wonders, and subjectivities. It is not easy to investigate the subjectivities of the observers. I have also been part of my study, which means I could be faced with a multifaceted position...; some subjects are part of the classroom observation practices, and I try to do my best to provoke the ELT (English Language Teaching) community to know more about the Observers’ Subject Positions.

My Research Delves Into...

This research project explores the unseen, silenced, and effective invisibility within the Observers’ Subject Positions in classroom observation practices in Colombia. The research also tries to sustain the idea that practices carried out by observers are not simply normalized (formats, rubrics, and data) but represent more than a process of instrumentalization. In other words, classroom observations, as part of social and educational practices, deal with power issues. This means that the observers are involved in asymmetrical power-relation situations where an expert reasoning system within school contexts prevails, faced with reflection and criticism.

There is a lot of information about classroom observations in the ELT field. As a point of departure, the review of literature allows me to recall Mercç's (2015) definition of classroom observation as an "operative device for learning how instructional methods are implemented, how teaching spaces are structured, and how learners are reactive to the classroom setting" (p. 194). Theoretically speaking, this comprehension is related to the idea that observations must be systematic to avoid causing a distorted view of what happens in class, so the benefits are tangible.

Classroom observation has been identified as an alternative tool for evaluating students' performance (Campbell & Duncan, 2007), a "component of a staff appraisal mechanism" (Lam, 2001), a "tool for self-monitoring" (Wichadee, 2011), and a "meaningful instrument for self-assessment" (Choopun & Tuppoom, 2014). The observation could be an easy method that teachers can include in their classrooms as they would likely face countless matters (or issues). This observation also offers devices for educational testing/supervision.

As stated, several authors have spoken about classroom observations (CO), and what I have done in my research project is to identify three main trends: The first trend declared is CO as a device to assess effective teaching; the second is observation as a top-down practice from the observers' eyes; and the third, the Observers' Subject Positions. I want to explore the interpretation of the Observers' Subject Positions related to my research topic since it represents an important assumption to consider. The observer's subjectivity is not judged or explored in the field.

It is recurrent that people who observe English classes are considered subjects who have had a certain experience in the field, a high level of language, vast work experience, and know the teaching practices in English in the context. Observation in the ELT field is somewhat normalized. A person must observe an English class to judge, evaluate, or provide feedback. Observation is a practice where the position of the observer and her/his subjectivity has not been problematized.

The Observer's Subject Position needs a skilled and trained eye to get, analyze, and benefit from observing the events of learning/teaching. The subject position of the observer is produced by the power of experts (Foucault, 1982). I have noticed that society validates the position of the observers, and the observer, in this specific case, in the ELT discipline.

Also, the observer's position is implemented through an imported structure, as Jordão (2016) highlighted. She points out that the "subjects" have submitted to the colonial structure and accepted imported methods, imported language

descriptions, and imported acquisition theories” (p. 196). In this research, not only the imported classroom observation methods will be uncovered, but also descriptions, theories, and probably the imported Observers’ Subject Positions will be seen.

Consequently, it would be appropriate to show the hidden narratives of the observers at the time of observing, what they think about CO, their points of view at the time of CO, the CO training, and how their subject positions have changed through working on Item. As can be seen, observers are also teachers, women or men, with experience in teaching, training, and structures. These can be practices of being (observers) that are in permanent movement and are not static or rigid. Foucault states it as “practices of the self, through which the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion” (Gutman *et al.*, 2022, p. 517). The observer position is the privileged one, benefited and exclusive. However, it is also an ignored position in the ELT field.

Little has been said about the Observers’ Subject Positions during classroom observations. There is a need to explore these human beings in the ELT field. The observer is the person who analyzes, judges, offers feedback and supports EFL teachers in a strategy of classroom observation (gathering information, assessment, or quality processes in Education programs). Consequently, this research represents situations that still need to be handled, where the observers’ subject position facilitates understanding of the dynamics of the practice of classroom observations, sometimes seen as a colonial mechanism of control and other times as a judgment and a helpful procedure.

Having these ideas about my research project, during the last years, I carried out these problem statements in the observers’ subject positions within ELT classroom observations:

- Normalization of the observer’s subject position as a canonical practice in ELT.
- The dehumanization of the observers in the ELT classroom observation practices.
- The invisible power issues of the observers within an expert reasoning system.

My research also looks into power relations, modernity discourses, subjectivity facts, and decolonial thinking as an option in the ELT field about the Observers’ Subject Positions in-classroom observation practices.

It is evident that some observers of English classes feel superior to those observed; it is a “top-down” system, where, historically and socially, observation is validated as a practice of surveillance, control, and evaluation of the performance

of English Language teachers. In this sense, I want to clarify that, as observers, we have subjective thoughts and biases. Although we have a format (objective technology) to carry out the observation, in most cases, we manage our subjectivity as we want/expect to. To conclude the description of my research, I have tried to critically analyze the colonial power matrix (especially) in observing English classes. There is total/universal knowledge about how to observe classes and why. However, I wonder, who observes the classes? What positions do these subjects have, and is it a static/structural position or a changing one? These positions of the ELT observers, I wonder, are in permanent movement and should be heard throughout the ELT field.

The following parts invite one to analyze the contribution to the field I covered in this research project regarding methodology, research vehicles, and procedures (instruments).

Research Vehicles and Procedures

Before pointing out the methodological assumptions of my research, I would like to mention that during the literature review of my topic of interest (CO / Observers' Subject Positions), I stumbled upon research projects where their methods, instruments, or collection of information are based on questionnaires to participants, structured and semi-structured interviews and classroom observations indeed. Most of these projects inquire about the instruments implemented and the validity of the results in studying the information obtained. At the same time, many methodological chapters have to do with answers to questions such as: Is the objective to point out a theoretical research problem? Why is it necessary to have the most suitable approach to answering your research questions? Are there any ethical or philosophical considerations at the time of research? What can be the criteria for validity and reliability in this research?

These previous questions could be analyzed for an open panorama of what to find in this chapter about methodological uncertainties and struggles. However, I would also like to remember how power knowledge operates in Classroom Observation Practices (COP) through different discourses, an analysis of the COP historically and socially constructed on itself, and an understanding of the Observers' Subject Positions (others) in the ELT classroom observations. I have learned from my doctoral studies, my daily routine experience, and some empirical practices that what is important here is to delve into the uncertainties of the Observers' Subject Positions, their beliefs, positions, assumptions, and the principles of the COP / the human beings who interact on that.

Additionally, this chapter contributes to the ELT field, drawing on reflections from my research regarding methodology and instruments. The idea at the end is to highlight contributions reflecting on current, innovative, and uncertain research vehicles and procedures within Observers' Subject Positions in-class observations. It is important to stress that I am honored to be part of a doctoral program that gives importance to "other" ways of doing research, to carry out research practices where something is not seen, and where it is necessary to think of different possibilities rather than critically embracing the normalized research structure. As a result of said learning, this chapter considers the following underpinning methodological ideas: The ontological is before the epistemological, participants as Teammates, and horizontal provocation.

The Ontological is Before the Epistemological (Vasilachis, 1992)

Before determining if ontology should come before epistemology, I would like to understand my research project from an ontological perspective. I have tried to understand ontology as the existence or non-existence of specific entities and how they relate to each other if they exist. Ontology refers to myself as a researcher, ELT educator, observer, and student. However, having an ontological stance in classroom observations within observers is quite complicated. Also, I can say my study is based on beings (observers) that exist and not on the particular situations obtained from them as a series of certain properties. Based on that, I have tried to discover "the position of the being of my existence" through my understanding, experience, and self-reflection.

These concepts of understanding, experience, and reflection from my being have helped me achieve epistemological and methodological positions, particularly in my research process. To reinforce this idea, I would like to quote, "...on that account, ontological considerations come before epistemological and methodological ones. That is why we must deal with the question about who is known before the one about how it is known..." (Vasilachis, 1992, p. 52).

I can see myself in a mirror when I observe teachers in classes that foster significant or different ways of teaching. This study allows me to reflect on the pedagogical and social practices that are carried out in English classes in Colombia. Do some questions come to mind, such as how to evaluate a class as an observer? Am I more interested in the evaluation rubric or the class dynamics? Could I observe a class from what the students enjoy/learn but not the step-by-step procedures of the English classes? Should the observer put himself in the situation of the observed teacher, yes or no? These questions reflect the reality of classroom observations and the observer's position. I have yet to identify these realities in documents, policies, or guidelines for bilingualism/language strengthening.

These situations rarely come to light; something uncertain should be argued from an ontological assumption.

This is also a qualitative research project with some relevant characteristics that help me specify my epistemological reflection. About this, Vasilachis (1992) said:

Qualitative research comprises different orientations and approaches, various intellectual and disciplinary traditions grounded, often, in different philosophical assumptions. All these different orientations, approaches, and assumptions generate new data-gathering and analysis strategies. This variety of views on what is known, what may be known, how it is known, and on the way, findings are to be transmitted demands an acknowledgment that there is not one legitimate way to conduct qualitative research. (p. 7)

If I characterized my qualitative research, I would enable those characteristics to be collected according to who has studied the particularities of a method and the goal of the inquiry. My methodological research part also seeks to give great importance to qualitative research, which displays an interest in people's lives, behavior, and interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17) and in trying to appreciate those worlds through such views (Savage, 2000, p. 330; 2006, p. 384).

Qualitative research seems interested in personal narratives and life stories in social contexts. My learning in this part focuses on studying myself as a classroom observer and teacher-researcher. This would offer important challenges in my research. However, the purpose stands on the social theories that presuppose contrasts between individuals and groups (I am reflecting on myself and the tensions I go through along this research process). In methodological words, I can also project myself into a multifaceted position where my position as an observer is affected by analyzing the teachers' classes and knowing what is behind their pedagogical practices and what the observer feels, thinks, and claims. I understand the teacher is also the observer, but I move around when analyzing these positions and subjection processes.

Participants as Teammates

In previous academic experiences, I was researching from a hierarchical position where I, as a researcher, had the control and power to extract the data, get information from the participants (x and y people), and interpret whatever I could obtain from them. I want to be part of a co-construction of knowledge, experiences, and thoughts. My intention is not to criticize the traditional way of research. However, I want to do something different and complementary, *i.e.*, to break the power relations among the subjects, particularly with those involved

in my research, and to take down the idea that the researcher knows the most and is the only one who can do research. A reflection that has emerged in this research concerns horizontal research processes. Although the participants in this research have great recognition and credentials in the ELT field, it takes work to negotiate points of view (especially from ELT observers). This is what I mean by breaking the power relations between researcher-participants. My ideal situation is that we reflect together on the roles of the English class observers, we explore together the events that happen during the observation, and we discuss the many positions that pop up in the observation practices, and above all, the positions (other) of the ELT observers. In that respect, I would like to introduce this. My team is composed of extraordinary human beings.

My Team²

I am interested in researching with three close colleagues who have received training to observe ELT classrooms and who have worked as observers for several years in the Ministry of Education/Secretariats of Education in Colombia and worldwide. We also have been working together for more than five years, and we know the “territory” of Classroom Observation Practices (COP) in the Colombian ELT community.

It is meaningful to share as observers and be part of education projects in Colombia, where the COP was our daily routine. We had many valuable stories to bring to this research project. Let us have a look at my Teammates.

Tania

The first is Tania, who works at a well-recognized university. She was also part of a team of observers in the Secretariat of Education of Bogotá, Colombia. She has been working in external entities for some years. She is a great academic researcher, a passionate educator with high critical thinking, and an arts fan.

Wilson

My other friend is Wilson, an ELT Consultant for over five years here in Colombia. He has conducted many observations in schools and universities and worked most recently with the MEN. He has experience in both international and local education projects. We have shared amazing moments in training, national trips, and COP events. He is a good friend, kind, collaborative person, and has a beautiful dog called Pepita.

.....
2 My Team is the definition related to this research methodology's teammates (participants).

Alex

He has worked as an ELT consultant, observer, and advisor in Colombian universities, schools, and institutes for several years. He has participated in many classroom observations and was part of the language improvement strategies in the Secretariat of Education of Bogotá, Colombia. We have been friends for a long time and have done research projects together and participated in academic events, workshops, and talks, among others.

Some common aspects include expertise in COP, professional similarities, working experience, and academic background among the team. However, some ontological dissimilarities related to the teammates (likes, interests, wonders) are part of this research. This is another of the learning concerns regarding the methodological part of my research. We can work as observers and get the same training, but we face differences in our subjectivities, thoughts, and feelings.

Similarly, another great lesson I have received when carrying out this doctoral research, specifically, is the part of the methodology that has to do with the ethical assumption. I have had the opportunity to meet with my team, and most of them highlight getting a signed consent. Despite their high profiles, they see the importance of the ethical parameters involved in this research. They decided by themselves to sign a document representing some personal aspects, but they did it without any problem and mentioned that this is an honest action for a researcher. Another anecdote I would like to mention occurred when two of my teammates gave me advice, tips on opportunities for improvement, or situations to think about regarding my doctoral research project. This action makes us more human and does not seem like a rigid, academic-demanding process. We are a team that will impact and benefit the ELT field with this research. They are valuable people in my academic process, and I appreciate their help, knowledge, and time.

Analyzing the four observers' subjectivities (including mine) will decode our negotiations, feelings, and struggles during observation. The idea is to handle a reflection that will give a more detailed view of what happens in classroom observations, analyze the subjects' positions, and understand the why, who observes, and by whom the observation is done.

These power relations in observation practices can not only be seen from the subject (observer). The observed teachers' narratives, particularities, and experiences will also help to analyze this negotiation, where the different positions of the ELT observers emerge.

Furthermore, this seems like something other than a traditional analysis I propose to give a voice to the Teammates. I am the chain to support and inquire

about reflective assumptions. My team interprets and analyzes the data collection (together); plus, the role of the Teammates is to co-construct the theory that emerges from our encounters. With the data collection from our meetings, the vehicles (instruments), and our further reflections, we could offer analytic-reflexive detours.

Although the participants' agendas are very tight, in most cases, the reflection, interpretation, and analysis of the information have been agreed upon. As an approach to a decolonial project, it is intended that in teamwork, we can create "other" ways of thinking, feeling, and existing, which requires the configuration of new types of knowledge, especially within the positions of ELT class observers.

Horizontal Provocation

How can I achieve a Horizontal Provocation? I have found a lot of information about classroom observation as a technique, instrument, and evaluation process. However, there needs to be more about the observers' stories, their experiences during this practice, and what happens beyond the evaluation rubrics they should do. Accordingly, I propose the following insight to give scope and a broader picture of my research project.

"Horizontality is usually the construction of knowledge created by the intersection among subjects and, therefore, by the intersection of knowledge" (Pérez & Sartorello, 2012, p. 11). But I have asked myself, how do I carry out this horizontal process in my research project? I think the first thing is to identify my Teammates who are part of my research. The people described above are of great importance to addressing paradigms and situations in the future and beginning this part of the methodology, *i.e.*, introducing them. Also, it seems that I (as a researcher) should "be transparent" with/for/from them... I mean, I consider that a starting point is to tell them in a narrated way my situations as an observer, what has happened to me at the time of having the training to observe, and the experiences I have had carrying out classroom observations. Being open with them about my feelings, struggles, and thoughts allows me to have a more horizontal approach since I do not ask the participants for information... I share a part of myself with them, from what I have inside.

I wrote some autobiographical chapters at the beginning of my doctoral studies, and I shared those with my team. It has been rewarding to see how these observers reacted to my stories; they also agreed with some aspects and ontological dissimilarities. It is not easy to identify or report people's subjectivities or inquire about their subject positions. Even more so, it could probably be an introspective reflection when I am the only one immersed in this study. These instruments could also be part of my research project's horizontality and data collection.

A Biographical/ Autobiographical Study

It is relevant to work together with the team. We could analyze the observers' position and research in-depth about the observers' living, feelings, and wonders. We will be narrators of our own stories, and it would be interesting to analyze them so that in the future, we could find out hidden subjectivities of the observers, what is not written in the rubrics, and what possibly helps in the field of ELT through the analysis of those stories.

This biographical/autobiographical study aims to reveal evidence about the feelings, struggles, achievements, failures, and other things that observers have from their positions. Identifying some sensations with a biographical/autobiographical narrative not found in previous research papers is possible. My idea is to carry out a reflective journal where the experiences that observers have had in their daily practices are kept and analyzed. I will collect observers' narratives and present hidden subjectivities that have been hidden / invisible in the ELT field in Colombia. To do so, it is necessary to get a preliminary autobiographical narrative of the team to take part in the analysis. Then, the transcription of their subjectivities must be done, and finally, the getting of their interpretations and critical comments for the future.

It is a rigid and structural procedure technique. However, I do not forget that my team comprises humans with their own "beings" who need to be heard by the ELT community, so I intend to reflect upon people's life experiences. One of the uncertain situations in this part of the methodology is confusing the essence of the interviews with the biographical study. As far as possible, I will try to ensure that the techniques or instruments I develop have characteristics where spontaneous thoughts, unexpected ideas, and narratives of the team will become more real than an "ideal" production.

Stories/Life Stories³

I am also interested in writing stories within the methodological process of my research. As Cornejo *et al.* (2008) state, "these stories about how we feel, how we define ourselves or about our position facing a certain theme, they are the first level of interpretation of the experience we live, placing it from a 'narrator' that is us themselves" (p. 37).

These stories define and differentiate us from others, so they play a role in identity construction. In them, there are contradictions, tensions, and ambivalences;

3 The story or life story is a tool closer to the logic of qualitative designs based on the approach of in-depth interviews with a sample of human being(s).

the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves have a dynamic character that is constantly changing but always depending on another story that integrates them and gives them a new meaning. (Cornejo *et al.*, 2008, p. 38).

By using stories in this research, I would work analytically on the account of the observers' positions about themselves or an aspect of their lives. I interpret the production of the narrator, which, in turn, is an interpretation that the observers make of their own.

The story corresponds to a narrator's written or oral enunciation of one's life or part of it. It is necessary to include the life story for its part. In these stories, I learned to see observers' life stories, feelings when the observer is capturing information inside the classroom, achievements, disappointments in the observations, and more, which will be recognized for the analysis and planning of this research project's activities in the future.

One instrument I have thought about for a long time is the classroom observation form. It may be part of a research instrument in the study of the Team, reviewing different points of view, meshing the information obtained, and analyzing with reflections that emerge from the meetings of all of us. I did not include this tool before, as the classroom observation guideline can be discussed in our team's encounters. We may reflect further on these and identify more data in the research to meet both teammates (singular or collective).

Conclusion

This exercise of research in a "different"/"other" way offers a reflective and challenging view. It is difficult to carry out a research project like this since I was used to researching something more structural (which is not bad). Many people do that and get successful results/ to have an impact in the field. However, now I think that researching in a "different"/"other" way enriches me as a professional researcher, and professional. I have gone through struggles, intrigues, happiness, and uncertainties. These uncertainties teach me that there are authentic ways to collect information, where perhaps the story is not part of a methodological instrument or a horizontal provocation does not exist.

Based on my experience, the importance of ontology in classroom observation practices has rarely been discussed. The Observer Subject needs to be related to being, becoming, existence, reality, and their relations. The idea in this methodological chapter, "The ontological is before the epistemological," reflects on this and interprets unexplored methodological research thought. Moreover, giving special attention to the human being in a methodological process is relevant. I discovered that research is important for knowledge development. However,

when this chapter refers to a part of participants as teammates, what I mean is that on “my team,” we create bonds of friendship, and we also share other spaces outside the academic one, so it can be said that there is a quality of life on the “team.” I enjoy sharing with my Teammates who are part of my research, and the theory and reflections should emerge from our encounters since we are narrators of stories, experiences, and subjectivities.

Finally, presenting autobiographies positions me horizontally. Thus I feel comfortable telling my stories as an observer of my feelings and struggles. Also, meaningful experience in this part involves learning to listen... It is not a simple practice, and despite this, my teammates’ stories, life stories, and experiences allow me to enjoy and learn with/from them.

This research has critical, post-structural assumptions and hints into a decolonial project. I can leave it to the readers to inquire about my research position. I want to show here the ways to go around my feelings, the context in which my project is placed, the subjects who interact on this path, and the methodological uncertainties in the Observers’ Subject Positions within ELT class observations.

References

- Campbell, C., & Duncan, G. (2007). From theory to practice: General trends in foreign language teaching methodology and their influence on language assessment. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(6), (pp. 592-611).
- Cornejo, M, Mendoza, F, & Rojas, R. (2008). Research with Life Stories: Clues and Options of the Methodological Design. *Psyche (Santiago)*, 17(1), 29-39. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-22282008000100004>
- Choopun, J., & Tuppoom, J. (2014). The perspectives of EFL Thai teachers on self-assessment. In *The 34th Thailand TESOL International Conference Proceedings*, pp. 50-69.
- Gutman, H., Hutton, P. H., & Martin, L. H. (Eds.). (2022). *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Jordão, C. M. (2016). Decolonizing identities: English for internationalization in a Brazilian university. *Interfaces Brazil/Canadá*, 16(1), 191-209.
- Lam, S. F. (2001). Educators’ opinions on classroom observation as a staff development and appraisal practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(2), 161-173.
- Merç, A. (2015). The Potential of General Classroom Observation: Turkish EFL Teachers’ Perceptions, Sentiments, and Readiness for Action. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 3(4), 193-205.

- Pérez D. M., & Sartorello, S. (2012). *Horizontalidad, Diálogo y Reciprocidad en los Metodos de Investigacion Social y Cultural*. Centro de Estudios Sociales y Jurídicos Mispát, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí, Consejo de Ciencia y Tecnología del Estado de Chiapas & Educación para las Ciencias en Chiapas.
- Savage, J. (2000). Participatory observation: Standing in the shoes of others? *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 324-339.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage Publications.
- Vasilachis, De Gialdino, I. (1992). *Qualitative methods. Theoretical-epistemological problems*. Publishing Center of Latin America.
- Wichadee, S. (2011). Professional development: A path to success for EFL teachers. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 4(5), 13-22.

What Does this Journey Look Like?¹

Mireya Esther Castañeda Usaquén

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

*Walkers, there is no path,
paths are made by walking*

Machado (1912, p. 88, original in Spanish)

Introduction

Research and life go hand-in-hand because, as human beings, we always desire to understand and give significance to what we do, feel, or experience. When I do not understand a situation, I reflect, chat with people, read, and do whatever is in my hands to get to know from different perspectives what is happening. Then, I make decisions or take an action. In fact, this study originates in the school where I spent half of my life, my second home. However, I have noticed that when discussing academic research, most people find this complex, unreachable, and even painful. Now, I want to share how I have planned this journey and some of the steps I have walked to place research in our everyday lives, keeping in mind that I should follow certain protocols that the doctoral program requests regarding methodology. In this chapter, I introduce the journey I have undertaken to explore this world called *Public Primary School Teachers' Stories about English Language Teaching*. I use the word journey to refer to this complex but awe-inspiring action of doing research. Along these pages, you will find a description of the very short path I have walked so far in terms of my destination, my companions, crossroads, itinerary, and some of the ways I have thought to walk this path. I hope this piece of writing encourages readers to find their ways of doing research.

1 The title of my thesis is *Public Primary School Teachers' Stories about English Language Teaching*.

Memories from My Research Path!

*Decolonial thinking is not a method to apply
but a way of being in and thinking the world*

Walter Mignolo (2014, p. 62)

I studied for a B.Ed. in English, and a Master's in Applied Linguistics to teach English as a Foreign Language. Now, I am studying for the Inter-institutional Doctorate in Education at the District University Francisco José de Caldas. I have taught English for more than twenty years, and now I would like to explore the dynamics of teaching English where I work. This part outlines my trajectory as a student/teacher/researcher from my undergraduate studies.

In 1994, I decided to do my final undergraduate work for my B.Ed. with an indigenous community called Nasa (better known as *Paeces*), who have lived in Puerto Rico, Caquetá, in Colombia for many years. One of the chapters of this thesis was devoted to the characterization of this community because they needed this description to get some financial support from the State to carry out their projects. Since then, I strongly believe every study has to leave something beneficial for working people and sharing their knowledge and life with researchers. Furthermore, researchers suggested the inclusion of the learners' grandparents' ancestral knowledge (e.g., language, religion, knitting) in primary school to motivate young people to speak Nasayuwe, their mother language. They encouraged them to speak their native language at school to preserve their culture. Speaking Spanish at school is one of the mechanisms schooling uses to homogenize people by imposing a single way to talk, teaching Spanish as the official language.

My teaching experience at public schools started in April 2001. I chose a semi-rural school located in the south of Bogotá. I had a large class of fifty-one sixth graders. Students motivated me to continue my studies due to the number of questions related to English Language Teaching (ELT henceforth) that came to mind in those circumstances. Consequently, I initiated a Master's Program in Applied Linguistics at TEFL, keeping in mind this beloved group. At that moment, I explored the intercultural awareness of adolescent students when using culture-based materials during English class. This work opened my eyes to a broader perspective on culture and identity, and this also provided me with ideas and reflections on how materials with cultural content could be created, used or adapted to contexts and specific needs.

Additionally, the social studies teacher and I created some material in English about historical facts from Colombia that gave us insights into the students' understanding of cultures. I agreed with López-Gopar (2009) when he stated that "children became teachers and linguists" (p. 3) because, during our classes, when my students were writing, they used different strategies to learn (e.g., inventive spelling). So, if the teachers do not reflect upon those students' learning processes, they can misunderstand those ways of learning as errors (Castañeda-Usaquén, 2012, p. 41).

Between 2010 and 2011, I developed a project with seventh graders, and at the end, they created their books, read them aloud, and recorded their voices. Our experience was recognized, and students became the authors of their English Books. These activities show how teachers and students can work together to understand their practices from their roles, contributing to teaching and learning. Seventh graders and I learned from each other. Accordingly, there is not only one way of being or knowing but multiple ways.

In 2011, in one of my experiences as a university teacher, I joined a private university research group focusing on developing competencies among the students there. I had to follow the techniques proposed by the main researcher due to their already having presented the project, and we had to adjust to the project. I did not feel comfortable doing quantitative analysis, applying progress exams to my students/participants, and comparing results between the control and experimental groups. In conclusion, I believe this was a way to promote standardized exams in the department.

Then, in 2012, I became a coordinator in the primary section of a public school located in Bogotá. I had not been in elementary settings for more than fifteen years. To perform my new role best, I studied a specialization in educational management in 2014. There, my colleagues and I carried out a research study that compared a charter school and my school, having as a core the occupations of the graduates.

After eight years as a coordinator, I wrote reports, presented statistics, and did activities that took me away from the educational field. Yelicich (2019) argues that school directors work to fulfill the market needs. For instance, "evaluation which does not revise the procedures, because this is a control mechanism; accountability; control and supervision; achievement pointers and rankings; good practices; coaching, [...]; incentives related to productivity; and marketing at school" (p. 237). This is to explain that those tasks are not questioned at school, they have become natural, and so Yelicich encourages school directors to "reposition education as the core of school tasks" (p. 240). I also felt the need to organize a group with teachers to transform our realities in terms of ELT. Thus,

Kuramavidelu (2002) explained that teachers (*i.e.*, teachers-coordinators) “organize themselves as a community of educators dedicated to the creation and implementation of forms of knowledge that are relevant to their specific contexts” (p. 14). But how could I contribute to transforming ELT in the school without knowing this in-depth? I realized that I needed to know myself, read our school dynamics, chat with teachers, study, and do research.

The Destination I Want to Understand

Knowledge comes from learning.

Wisdom comes from living

Anthony Douglas Williams

This research looks into teachers’ practices when facing English Language Teaching. ELT policies are made without paying much attention to our realities. Implementing ELT policies dehumanizes our community because these do not consider students’ and teachers’ backgrounds and ways of knowing. Thus, school tends to homogenize people and takes for granted that all public elementary school teachers have studied English during their training, that they like English, and that they can teach this language. This condition represents a critical area that has not been examined in depth. Accordingly, analyzing these circumstances and their interpretations could contribute to understanding teachers’ emotions, decisions, frustrations, and actions taken when teaching English to children. The results of this study could enrich our educational community’s points of view, increasing the reflection upon cultures and visions of the world that ELT encompasses. In other words, WE (my companions and me I-henceforth) would understand our teaching experiences as human beings within our own stories, which embrace knowledge, emotions, and ways of doing.

What Does this Journey Involve?

*Life is a succession of lessons
that must be lived to be learned.*

Anonymous

De-colonial way of doing research has to do with the human being who dares to look for footprints to be followed, to learn from them, and to be able to modify the path. A de-colonial researcher is a person who thinks, feels, knows, acts, communicates, and behaves, distinguishing colonial traits given by family, school, religion, media, work, friends, hobbies, and so on. A de-colonial researcher follows, adapts, or creates paths, procedures, and techniques to conduct research. Here, I describe my conception of consent forms and how I have modified them; I share my experience with piloting data collection techniques, and I show my attempt to do research in my manner. This is how I have lived methodology in this journey.

My ancestors came from different places in the world. I have heritage from Asia, Europe, and my beloved indigenous people. Some of these phenotypic characteristics are evident in my mother, who was called “little Japanese girl” when she was a child because she had Chinese-like eyes; my father has blue eyes; and one of my last names is Usaquén, which implies that my grandmother belonged to an ethnic group located in Cundinamarca. So, I am a mestiza who spoke Spanish and studied a career to be an English teacher. I taught at private and public institutions at different educational levels for over two decades. Now, I am a coordinator who wants to explore the dynamics of ELT in a public primary school where elementary teachers have to teach English to their students.

I began all this with a short story about who I am and what I have done to introduce the approach selected in this study, the biographical-narrative approach proposed by Bolívar (2012). Accordingly, the interest in understanding the lives of the subjects and how they have been built personally and professionally as part of the culture in which they develop (biographical research), to reach, finally, the subject and how s/he narrates her/his own story as a way of understanding the world in which s/he lives (Rivas *et al.*, 2012, p.16).

Teachers’ stories “are presented with names, places, moments, and people close to us daily. We are faced with a myriad of common knowledge, actions, stories, myths, experiences and senses that involve contradictory aspects of our experiences, but which magically make up our lives” (Rivas *et al.*, 2012, p. 53).

Doing research in a de-colonial way entails adjustments to data collection methods. To do so, I began by modifying impersonal consent forms into special invitations, I had to pilot the interviews as a request for one of the seminars, and I ended up having moving conversations with my companions. In other words, my purpose is to place research in our daily lives.

Invitations to this Journey

From my perspective and the values taught at home, I would not need a consent form; just my word and commitment would be enough. I would not need to sign any document supporting my promise. I honor my word. In research, consent forms are created as formats for everyone. However, when I had to write a single consent form as a requirement to be able to publish what my colleagues had shared with me, I felt the need to make this format more personal because I am convinced that a consent form is an invitation to start a trek shoulder to shoulder.

Consequently, I wrote a customized invitation letter for each of my fellow collaborators. In this letter, I include the date, the name of my companion, the actions my companion has taken related to the English language or ELT that have called my attention, my promise that each of them would know what is going to be shared before anyone else, the yes/no question about her willingness to be part of the research, a space to write her pseudonym and the signature. However, I think I betrayed my idea of placing research in our daily lives when I asked for a fictitious name because we do not use it in real life. I do not want to anonymize my colleagues; on the contrary, I need to honor their voices. Luckily, I wrote (optional) next to a pseudonym. One of my companions has a pseudonym; two want to appear with a short form of their names, as they are called with affection; four composed a name using letters of their full names, and the rest have their proper names.

WE are sharing our stories about the English language and ELT in our context; these stories constitute the knowledge WE have. So, the question is: Why do WE have to create a pseudonym? When a reader/researcher finds something interesting to cite, s/he quotes my name or the pseudonym. This means the person who shares her knowledge is not recognized as the co-author of that idea. It is right to think that I carried out this research, but my colleagues made it possible for the whole process to be finished. After all, as Windchief and Timothy (2019) claim, “honor the people that have worked with us” (p. 43). I have in my hands pieces of our lives; they do not constitute that so-called data.

I wrote an invitation letter to each of my colleagues, expressing my motives to work with them and letting them know that this study could not have been possible without their support. Now, having my companions’ acceptance to share our stories, it is time to approach my companions with emotions: “curiosity, gratitude, trust, compassion, love” (Calvo, 2019, p. 70) and they are there knowing something that I do not, and I learn from them, and vice versa. Going beyond that, Suárez-Krabbe (2011) uses the concept of proximity from (Dussel, 1996), which incites uncertainties and makes me feel down to earth because we rely on

each other independently; proximity is “approaching fraternity, shortening the distance to someone who can wait or reject us, shake hands or hurt us, kiss us or kill us” (p. 200). At this point, the professors and I (the student researcher) did not know how “conversations” instead of interviews would work. They asked me to pilot data collection instruments.

Piloting: Recognizing the Terrain

In some of the first student cohort presentations, I witnessed their nervousness when asked about the relevance of piloting in a de-colonial way of doing research. I was puzzled about this reaction and asked myself: Do I have to pilot my conversations? Of course, I have to pilot the “instruments” in this doctoral program. I will tell the story of this academic activity here:

After being reluctant to do the piloting exercise because I was not convinced of its benefits, the pandemic appeared in our academic life. Hiking, one of my passions, helped me find meaning in this piloting exercise because when you go hiking, you need to make some arrangements and recognize the terrain before starting this journey you want to have a lovely experience. So, piloting was like exploring the terrain in this research adventure.

I invited two friends of mine (coordinators) to talk. Both agreed! I set up the meeting via Teams. Luckily, the Secretary of Education offered a video conference about how to use “Teams”! We need a computer with a microphone, a camera, and a good Internet connection to record videoconferences. We were curious to use “Teams” because we knew that soon, we would have to use this way of communication to organize meetings with teachers. This was perfect! As I would like to know about teachers’ relationships with the English language, our conversations (learning paths) were centered on our childhood at school and life experiences regarding English. I used Children’s Rounds or Nursery Rhymes (hiking Poles) because we usually played and sang in my little school. So, nursery rhymes or children’s rounds remind us of past life events. Later, I attended a conference where some songs were played, and suddenly, many memories came to my mind. That is why I prepared some videos with nursery rhymes to provoke chats.

My companions for this piloting exercise were Leo and Sun. I met Leo 13 years ago in a preparation course for the First Certificate in English Examination. Since then, we have met up in several academic courses and events, and shared influential moments in our lives. One day, a group of friends and I talked about our childhood. This moment was a very moving for some of us because many had had unpleasant experiences in elementary school. Leo talked about the year he studied far from his home and family. I remembered this, and I got anxious.

I asked myself, “What if Leo does not want to talk?” With these concerns, I prepared the “piloting exercise.” I sent the invitation named “Escuela” (primary school). Leo was very punctual, as always. In the beginning, we chatted about the situation in our schools and what we had been doing, but as soon as I set the topic, “let’s go back to our primary school.” There were some moments of silence, which, for me, were minutes. I panicked when he exclaimed: “I have a very bad memory, Mireyita. I don’t remember anything”.

Quickly, I suggested: Let’s listen to some songs! Maybe this will make us remember something about our early years at school. I read the titles and chose *The Bridge is falling down* (El Puente está quebrado). Then, he described school life events in the third and fifth grades. He also expressed his opinions about public education in primary schools. In the last minutes, we discussed the “piloting exercise” regarding his feelings, opinions, and suggestions. This was a marvelous experience to be repeated!

I felt secure to do another “piloting exercise.” So, I invited Sun to a meeting. We could schedule it after solving a problem with her e-mail. I met Sun 14 years ago at Juana Escobar School, where she taught Math. We worked together for five years and have been friends since then. We chatted about different topics, but I had no idea about her childhood. She has had bad experiences when studying English. She does not like being video recorded, and neither do I. I was impatient with Sun, and we were sharing many issues from the schools where we work, but she was delighted to share ideas and, as she confessed: certain? (I can let it all out, can’t I?) We talked for more than an hour... I pretended not to be in a hurry, but certainly, I was. Then, I remembered that we were video recording. When I commented that we did not need the camera, she turned it off and started discussing our childhood. She exclaimed: “I have a bad memory,” and I suggested listening to children’s rounds. I read the titles and she shouted instantly: “Any of those rounds except the bridge is falling” (Any of those rounds except “bridge is falling”) and asked why? “Because it brings back bad memories” (Because it brings back bad memories)

Sun talked about such poignant moments that I couldn’t avoid crying ¡oh, no! I felt she was sharing intimate moments of her life. She admitted she hadn’t talked before about this with anyone. For her round, she chose “The elephants were swinging.” (The balancing elephants), but I had technical problems because I couldn’t share the link. Immediately, she shared the video on the screen. Laughing, she said: “I am learning and taking advantage of you, too”.

We continued with our relaxing conversation. I learned about her school life since we talked about our lunch boxes, our behavior at school, our English classes, and her talent (I did not know that she played the *Quena*, an Andean flute).

I also wanted to know about the “piloting exercise.” How did she feel while we were talking? And if she had any suggestions to consider for a future conversation. Our meeting lasted an hour and thirty-nine minutes; however, our chat about our childhood at school lasted twenty/ one minutes and thirty/ four seconds! We had an amazing conversation!

Things to Keep in Mind to Continue this Research Journey

Sun suggested that I record the audio because she was distracted by the images of the YouTube video on the screen. Also, I should: practice sharing documents or links before having a conversation with someone else, leave my agenda free when I have conversations, be attentive to my companion’s reactions, and be patient and open-minded to expect the unexpected. Furthermore, Leo encouraged me to continue working on this project because it is engaging and interesting! Before starting our conversations, I have to ask my colleagues about the video recording because they may not like being video recorded. I had planned to audio record our conversations when we were face-to-face. Now, we could agree to have a video conference and an audio recording.

Leo, Sun, and I did not feel in an interview during this piloting exercise. We felt confident and free to talk. I hope the same happens throughout our conversations on this journey. On the other hand, I perceived that using Children’s Rounds helped us remember, but this was an artificial component in our chats.

Haste Makes Waste!²

One of the data collection methods is “interviews, which are more or less open about those issues that interest the researcher on various aspects, and their contents must be agreed upon” (Bolívar, 2012, p. 7). With my purpose of placing research into our daily lives, I propose conversations instead of interviews because WE are going to talk, which is an activity that corresponds to our daily realities. Choose Educate (2017, July 27) conceives conversations as the essence of our lives. Conversations also provoke horizontal relationships, which tell us about the action of accompaniment and active listening (Rivas *et al.*, 2012, p. 12). I do not want to be an interviewer who obtains information from interviewees by asking open-ended questions or a formalized list of questions. WE do not have to prepare questions or answers; WE agreed on discussing our relationship with the English language and our experiences in ELT.

After chatting about our academic trajectories or life experiences regarding English, WE would share our emotions, suggestions, and impressions that arise

.....

2 “Dress me slowly because I’m in a hurry” is a popular saying!

because it is very important for me to know how WE feel during our meetings. Afterward, I have planned to create a narrative based on our conversations because “thinking comes from conversations and dialogues, from being with people in different contexts [...] Making dialogue explicit in writing makes it more alive, more human and more capable of convening” (Walsh, 2019 in Sycorax, p. 7). Then, WE can read and comment on our stories as a group. “It can be said that through research with life stories and narrative research, a public construction of knowledge takes place, from dialogue and intersubjective relationship” (Rivas et al., 2012, p. 17).

Before Starting to Walk: Are There any Crossroads?

Reading different authors, I feel at a crossroads because I have to write about the methodology, but “the research process can only be explained once the investigation has already finished” (Borsani, 2014, p. 165). This idea made me destabilize mine, and I started tottering on slippery and uncertain terrain. However, I will describe this research effort, keeping in mind that eventualities can occur.

The first contingency appeared on the way, being that these days, the world and our country have been locked down because of the pandemic. Consequently, WE worked on this project using a computer or smartphone and the “Microsoft Teams” conference tool and Internet service to carry out this project. We continued conversing; these chat sessions were video or/and audio-recorded. What a pitiful situation! I prefer having face-to-face conversations to looking at screens.

The second event occurred because initially, I had written four invitation letters; However, during the project defense, jurors suggested that I have a larger number of participants, and Professor Mario asked a question, which made me reflect upon the voices that I had left aside: were they not relevant? Therefore, I wrote invitation letters to the whole group of primary homeroom teachers on the morning shift. I find it fascinating that you know how the invitation to accompany me took place and how my companions reacted, felt, and thought when receiving or hearing about this invitation. Some thought the letter was for a personal event, a work problem, or an academic assignment. Consequently, the invitation generated gratitude, curiosity, anxiety, remembrance, a feeling of being important/recognized, willingness to be part of the project, expectations to be helped at school, determination to do something, and the need to express opinions, feelings thoughts, abilities regarding the English language itself, and ELT too. I was elated because there were 20 of us on this journey!

Finally, anything can happen when you are on a journey, and your itinerary can vary depending on the circumstances. Therefore, I synchronized my schedule

with that of my companions. They chose the day and time for our conversations, where WE could value our voices, so WE were placed in a preferred location. In this study, teachers are “at the center, but not as an isolated entity, but as being in a relationship riddled with multiple links immersed in a social, political, and cultural context” (Rivas *et al.*, 2012, p. 16).

Overall, WE will build our stories that emerge from this research process, and my colleagues “will be the first ones to know about the findings of this study” (Rivas *et al.*, 2012, p. 53). In a way, WE can decide what will be shared.

What I Have Learned So Far!

*[inicio de epígrafe]The knowledge of life always surpasses
the knowledge of institutions.*

Walter Mignolo (in Giuliano & Berisso, 2014, p. 65)

I enjoy learning, and most of us enroll in this doctoral program due to the education process that has taught us to use universal knowledge, memorize grand narratives, listen to the big names to learn the truth or solve a problem. Conversely, in Mignolo’s words, “to think about one self’s signifies to think from the recognition of the colonial difference that constitutes us” (in Giuliano & Berisso, 2014, p. 69). In previous studies, I prepared semi/structured interviews, asked students their opinions about the materials, or requested participants to say certain expressions in Nasayuwe. I had conversations with my students and with the Nasa people. I learned much from them besides the “research tasks,” but I did not include them in my final document. So, during this time in the doctoral program, I realized that some instruments to collect data leave out the human part. This person is there living with us in contexts like school and community.

Consent forms are ways to invite people to walk together. Those invitation letters are opportunities to express to others my gratitude, respect, and curiosity to learn with them in this daily teaching event. These letters imply a strong commitment to sharing our time, emotions, personal/professional lives, beliefs, and ways to know my companions and myself. This is to say that invitations go beyond a standardized format that researchers hand out, the participants sign, and the researchers collect to support the participant’s approval. Thus, invitations are personal and filled with emotions, hopes, and uncertainties.

Conversations are a freer way to share emotions, ideas and learn daily, as I did in the piloting exercise. In other words, what is institutionalized are the interviews, surveys, and assessments that, once again, are formats that leave out the essence of daily life. Conversations are unique! All in all, we are stories worth being told.

To be continued...

References

- Borsani, M. (2014). Reconstrucciones metodológicas y/o metodologías a posteriori. *Astrolabe*, 13, 146-168. <https://doi.org/10.55441/1668.7515.n13.9028>
- Bolívar, A. (2012). *Metodología de la investigación biográfico-narrativa: Recogida y análisis de datos*. En M. C. Passeggi & M. H. Abrahao (Org.), *Dimensões epistemológicas e metodológicas da investigação (auto)biográfica* (pp. 79-109, Vol. II). Porto Alegre: Editoria da PUCRS. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2200.3929>
- Universidad de Ibagué. (2019, February 21). *The emotional texture of democracy* [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcEZO0AbiUU>
- Castañeda-Usaquén, M. (2012). Adolescent Students' Intercultural Awareness when Using Culture-Based Materials in the English Class. *PROFILE, Issues in teachers' professional development*. 14(1), 29-48. <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/29054>
- Calvo, A. (2019). De la ira a la compasión: el cultivo político de las emociones. *Ciudad Paz-ando*, 12(1), 66-77. <https://doi.org/10.14483/2422278X>
- Choose Educate. (2017, July 27). Amar Educa: Humberto Maturana's message to educators. [Video]. <https://eligeeducar.cl/amar-educa-mensajes-humberto-maturana-los-educadores>
- Giuliano, F., & Berisso, D. (2014). Education and decoloniality: learning to unlearn in order to re-learn. A geopolitical-pedagogical dialogue with Walter Mignolo. *Revista del IICE*, 35, 61-71. <https://doi.org/10.34096/riice.n35.1961>
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2002). *Beyond methods: Macro strategies for language teaching*. Yale University Press.
- López-Gopar, M. (2009). *What makes children different is what makes them better: Teaching Mexican children "English" to Foster Multilingual, Multiliteracies, and Intercultural Practices*. The University of Toronto. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/.../Lopez-Gopar_Mario_E_200911_PhD_thesis.pdf
- Machado, A. (1907-1917). *Campos de Castilla* [PDF archive]. Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2023. Prieto de Paula Ángel Ed. <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmc1204065>

- Rivas, J. I., Hernández, F., Sancho, J. M., & Núñez, C. (2012). *Historas de Vida en educacion: sujet, Dialgo y Expreenca*. Barcelona: Dipòsit Digital UB. <http://hdl.handle.net/2445/32345>
- Suárez-Krabbe, J. (2011). *In reality. Towards Decolonial Research Methodologies. Tabula Rasa*, 14. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/tara/n14/n14a08.pdf>
- Windchief, S., & Timothy, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Applying Indigenous Research Methods. Storying with peoples and communities*. Routledge. <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018041534>
- Yelich, C. (2019). The colonized school management. In A. De Melo, I. Espinosa Torres, L. Pons Bonals, & J. Rivas Flores (Eds.), *Decolonial perspectives on education* (pp. 213-244). UNICENTRO UMA.

Trans-Gressive Uncertainties In approaching Transgender Learner Experiences in ELT Pre-Service Teacher's Formation

Pedro Adolfo Cabrejo Ruiz

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

Me, Myself and Us

I hold a BA Degree in Lengua Castellana, English, and French from Universidad de La Salle. I have a Master's in Education English Didactics from Universidad Externado de Colombia. Now, I am running Ph.D. studies at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. I was chosen to represent Colombia in the International Teacher Training Program on Child Rights, Classroom and School Management offered by Lund University in Sweden, which the Swedish International Development Agency sponsored.

I have 22 years of teaching experience; I have taught and learned at all educational levels, from kindergarten to University and master's degree programs. I have coordinated formative research and language departments at different university levels. Among my academic production experiences are the translation of research articles from Spanish to English, as well as Co-authoring of texts for teaching English and human values. Currently, I work as a teacher trainer at the University De La Salle and the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

The Title of my thesis is "Trans" Learning Experiences of a Transgender Student in an Initial Language Teacher Education Program'. My academic interests rely on applied research for designing, developing, validating, and promoting teaching materials and strategies, emphasizing peer relationships, LGBTQ rights, education for coexistence, a healthy classroom environment, prevention of school violence, and resilience.

What Makes me Tick?

After teaching for more than 20 years, I have had the worthy opportunity to observe how “we” teachers deal with the power our investiture gives us, sometimes I have made mistakes, and sometimes I have seen how my colleagues have abused their power as well, explicitly talking about the misperception we might have about gender and LGBTQ students. Since I was an undergraduate student, my projects stood by understanding, supporting, and promoting integral development and healthy class environments in LGBTQ school communities.

That interest was aroused after I received hetero-normalized instruction during my school years undergraduate studies at the university. I had to struggle again with the monolithic gender binary conception that frames individuals “as hetero-normal.” Nevertheless, I studied at a Catholic university, I did my best, and finally, I could base my graduation project on the integral development perspectives homosexual students have in schools.

If the LGBTQ community was not contemplated in educational school scenarios, much less could be said about transgender students. After becoming a teacher, I have witnessed how gender variabilities are not considered in teachers’ formation scenarios. My growing intellectual has always been my priority. Seeking doctoral studies, I came across a wonderful human being, Harold Castaneda, and finally, I found someone who directed my research interest. My proposal mainly focuses on what is happening with university structures related to teachers’ formation, specifically in the formation of transgender subjects.

Universities are hyper-regulated spaces in which, invisibly, there are spaces of censorship in producing knowledge and selecting topics of interest for research and learning. Pre-service teachers’ formation has constituted a scenario in which gender diversity, especially Transgenderism, are not contemplated. Teacher formation in Colombia seems monolithic and does not include topics or contents that deal with gender, much less about Transgenderism. Concluding, my research is looking into how to explore Transgender students learning experiences and then, after analyzing those experiences, design a formal proposal to make future transgender English teachers visible.

Finding an Approach

Adopting Positions, “Apprehending Decolonial”

The first learning I achieved during the consolidation of this methodological chapter was the benefits and kindness decolonial projects have recognizing how colonial mechanisms have permeated all our current educational practices. In

one of the tutorials we had with Dr. Gabriel Medina (2009), he asserted, “the de-colonial perspective is installed in a place other than the heteronormal production of the teachers who have been formed under hetero culturally,” paraphrasing, the concepts of teacher formation have been homogenized by colonial hetero normativity, he also mentions; “a lot of discursive mechanisms perpetuate the monolithic idea of cisgender currently” (p. 16).

On the other hand, Walsh (2009) highlights that the de-colonial projects intend to point out, to provoke a positioning, a posture, and a continued attitude in terms of transgressing, intervening, in-arise, and influence. The Decolonial perspectives denote a continuous struggle in which we can identify, make visible, and encourage “places” of exteriority and alternative constructions.

The previous intentions depict the de-colonial perspective is aligned with my research objectives, to describe how the canonical stands have strengthened former teachers’ lacks and prejudices, to characterize how transgender students have been misgendered, “dis politicized,” decontextualized of their right of being, to identify how transgender students have been normalized through heteronormal teaching practices and grand narratives, to analyze personal life histories of transgender students and teachers.

Among the decolonial categories, “Coloniality and Gender” proposed by Maria Lugones (2008) allows me to understand how this patriarchal indifference is constructed, to transform it into something that becomes unavoidable and has to be recognized by those involved in liberating fights. This category also discusses a different approach, quite distinct from occidental feminisms, of understanding patriarchy from the coloniality of gender. Maria Lugones invites us to think about the cartography of global power from what she calls the Modern/ Colonial System of Gender.

After analyzing the ideas of Lugones about coloniality and gender, some important questions emerged: if the binary conception of gender is evident in our academic context, when did it happen? Since this binary perception of gender has been promoted, has it become an accepted rule? To answer these questions, it was necessary to go beyond tracing back. I did the second exercise of documentary archeology; this time, the resources were research articles and books, which allowed me to trace back the meaning that grand narratives attributed to transgender identities from some pre-Hispanic cultures until the meaning given nowadays after colonialism, looking into elements have been left unattended, unsaid or vanished from our current scenario concerned with gender wise, like the existence of transgender identities.

The books analyzed were; *History of Material Culture in Equinoctial America* Patiño (1993), specifically volume VII *Erotic life & Hygienic Customs*. In this book,

the author relates the experiences provided by a character (called “El Narrador” in Spanish, “The narrator” in English) who was the person in charge of telling, through writing narratives, all the things that were happening in America at the moment Spanish conquest broke into, from the text above mentioned the following excerpt is self-explanatory:

In America, homosexuality exists in various degrees, from the tribes that did not practice it except exceptionally, such as Cumanagotos, Chibchas, Quimbayas, and others, to being tolerated and even institutionalized in the Panamanian isthmus, the Caribbean coast, the north coast Peruvian and the Ecuadorian North Coast. (p. 172)

In the previous paragraph, “The Narrator” says that homosexuality was evident in several levels and cultures. In some of those cultures’ homosexuality, more than tolerated, was an institutionalized practice. From the previous excerpt, it is possible to infer that in America, the perception and meaning attributed to gender differ from our current binary conception. Also, lesbians were visible before the colonial period, as is exemplified in the same text in the following excerpt: “They called lesbianism patagüia, and those who practiced it were called patagüilani, flat ironers” (p. 81). It is evidenced how colonial mechanisms have vanished the role of homosexual individuals in pre-colonial societies.

In respect, Schatzky (2001) states: “history of discourses has always been used among others, to justify and maintain the social order” (p. 13), I can assert that this initial documentary analysis has been a light in the path of tracing back to problematize what has happened so far, since what point gender diverse individuals were banished from our daily life. Because of grand narratives as the binary conception of gender, transgender students have vanished from our current educational context; we cannot deny that most of us grow up knowing what our sex is. I strongly believe one of the main problems outlined in the situations lived by the transgender students concerns directly with the lack of knowledge and the fear this lacks produces in “US,” the initial educators of those future transgender teachers.

In conclusion, the exercise allowed me to position this research under a decolonial perspective since the evidence presented points toward when the heteronormal matrix was imposed, before America was conquered, the American aborigines recognized at least four gender variabilities. The decolonial perspective will allow me to build historical foundations in understanding from what point other gender conceptions were banished and the monolithic conception of binary sexuality was imposed; so far, that is uncertain. The switch I am proposing to appropriate a Decolonial Methodology is through drawing to tell; The innovation in the methodological approach consists in asking my participant to think about

learning experiences, then drawing them, talking about the experiences, and finally reflecting upon the experiences narrated in the interview. The instruments to develop this methodology are in-depth phenomenological interviews, video-taped records, transcriptional interviews, and drawing big books.

Setting up Positions

Ways of Being Regarding Epistemological and Ontological Positioning in Terms of Gender and Teacher Training

The second learning I achieved was to recognize who I am, not only in how to acknowledge but in understanding how acceptance of my humanity is the key to raising my locus of enunciation, only understanding who I am and the vision of the world I have, I will be able to understand other realities and epistemologies, in Amundson (1983) words; “all research work relies on a certain vision of the world, epistemological reflection is, therefore, consubstantial to any developed research” (p. 14).

Mignolo (2011) states that “decolonial projects” are synonymous with thinking and doing decolonially. All decolonial approaches should be based on the conception of the relationship of political, social, and cultural domination established by Europeans, coloniality, and modernity. This makes decoloniality both a political and an epistemic project. Given that the episteme of my research intends to decipher what the local knowledge says about Transgenderism, I decided to apprehend the Decolonial Perspective. The previously mentioned, because I consider our identity has been stolen, transgender identities in education have vanished and do not exist. It is a colonial problem since coloniality stole their existence.

Ontological Positioning

The word “subject,” etymologically speaking, has its origin in the Latin term *sub - jacere*, “subicere”; *sub-* “under,” + *jacere* “throw,” which means “born under” in “owing obedience.” Right beside this etymological definition comes the approach made by Bakhtin, 1998, Cited by Bubnova (1997), who wrote: The personalization is never a subjectivist position, its limit is not “one I” but “The I” in its interrelation with other subjects, it means I and other, me and you.

Following the author’s ideas, Bakhtin calls intuition the sympathy for which one subject moves into the interior of another to coincide with what is inside it, what is unique and therefore inexpressible, and is based on the relationship of human beings with his media world, for me, Bakhtin in this two paragraphs is

contextualizing the individuals as subjects, the author recognizes himself on another, and he called this act empathy, this thought represents the ability for you, to move inside others, to value the “inner” of other subjects.

On the path to conceptualizing or finding a better definition for the participants in my research, I came across Emmanuel Levinas (2000). In his book “Ethics and Infinity” he builds the concept of the subject, including Ideas from authors like Georg Hegel, Edmund Husserl, and Franz Kafka. They announce some categories that frame the term subject; subjectivity, otherness, intersubjectivity, alterity, and sameness. The previous dimensions are included in Levinas’ thoughts (*i.e.*, works of 1961 and 1974). These categories are descriptors of the encounter with another subject. That encounter frames a particular characteristic:

The other impacts me more than any other object or force. I can constitute the other subject cognitively, based on vision, as an alter ego. I can see that another human being is “like me, acts like me’, appears to be the master of her conscious life. (Levinas, 2000, p. 135)

My doctoral proposal is based on the human and professional understanding of the experiences in learning and formation of the future transgender ELT teachers, the characterization of the participants as “subjects” and its categories; subjectivity, otherness, intersubjectivity, alterity, and sameness, will be worthy in terms to profile them, avoiding objectifying them as I will explain further, currently, transgender students do not have a profile in learning and teaching scenarios, they are non-existent.

Innovating the Approach towards Avoiding Objectifying the Subject

The third learning I want to share is maybe the most important of the previous ones, “avoid objectifying the participants in my research”; In my experience teaching in universities, I have worked with several undergraduate students who have a deep and passionate interest in their research. Nevertheless they do objectify their participants just rushing towards the achievement of the data, procedures, and instruments seems to be so biased, the only concern about how to consolidate the data analysis chapter. It happened to me now in my doctoral, mainly because the topic I am researching is not easy to handle, and requests about the lives of transgender students’ experiences could be challenging. On the path to finding the best approach and methodology, I came across the author Irving Seidman (2013) and his book *Interviewing as qualitative research*.

What initially caught my attention was not only the fact he is a Professor Emeritus of qualitative research but how, in his beginnings, he had to deal with the

despair he felt because experimentalist and behaviorism ruled his procedures as a researcher. So, he proposed new procedures for phenomenological interviews, which conceive the participants as subjects, not only objects to be analyzed.

In chapter one of his book Seidman (2013) states, “Interviews are the best way to learn other people’s stories. More simply put, stories are a way of knowing” (p. 7). Seidman explains that the root of the word story is the Greek word *historian*, which means one who is “wise” and “learned.” With the previous explanation, I understand telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from the beginning, middle, and end. In order to give details of their experience a beginning, middle, and end, people must reflect on their experience. Shultz (1967, cited by Seidman, 2013) asserts that this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them makes telling stories a meaning-making experience.

Vygotsky (1987) affirms: “Every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness” (p. 237). It means to me that the consciousness of each subject gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people; these conceptions about interviews provide me with the clarity that I can use this method to inquire about the learning experiences of my participants, and how my participants represent their life issues.

Seidman also explains that for those interested in interviewing as a research method, perhaps the most telling argument is the significance of language to understanding human behavior, which means understanding the use of language to inquire with human beings. One aspect that characterizes us as humans is the ability to symbolize our experiences through language (Heron, 1981). Heron also affirms that the original archetypal paradigm of human inquiry is two persons talking and asking questions of each other. Literally, he says:

The use of language, itself, ...contains within it the paradigm of cooperative inquiry; and since language is the primary tool whose use enables human construction and intending to occur, it is difficult to see how there can be any more fundamental mode of inquiry for human beings into the human condition. (p. 26)

I could deduce from the previous quote that interviewing is more than a basic mode of asking has been a way of telling narratives or experiences. It has been the best way to perpetuate history so humans have taped and made sense of their experiences. Seidman as well affirms that telling stories is a “science” he supports his affirmations by quoting Peter Reason (1981):

The best stories are those that stir people's minds hearts and souls and by so doing give them new insights into themselves, their problems, and their human condition. The challenge is to develop a human science that can more fully serve this aim. The question, then, is not "is storytelling science?" but "can science learn to tell good stories?." (p. 50)

In this proposal of the qualitative interview method, Seidman introduces consistency to the exercise by talking about "in-depth interviewing," asserting that interviews are not only a test hypothesis. Interviews are not to "evaluate" when they are normally used, but in-depth interviewing is an exciting understanding of the living experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. His words are:

Being interested in others is the key to some of the basic assumptions underlying interviewing technique. It requires that we interviewers keep our egos in check. I require that we realize we are not the center of the world. It demands that our actions as interviewers indicate that other stories are important. (p. 9)

Agreeing with the previous paragraph, I need to add that, specifically in research about gender, bias is often committed. At least, this is one of the conclusions I obtained from a profiling exercise I did for my research. Researchers are often dragging their research results toward the participants' victimization. This is one of the reasons I consider it a priority to include the participants of my research in the elaboration of the questions of the interviews to avoid committing bias.

Regarding this process of co-constructing the instruments of this research, I agree with Seidman's ideas: "The primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of individual people, the others" (p. 10). According to these ideas, Ferrarotti (1981) states that social abstractions like "education" are best understood through the experiences of the individuals whose work and lives are the bases for the abstraction's construction.

Following the above, the literature review and profiling exercise are done for state of the art in this research, it was possible to evidence that little research is done on transgender issues in the educational field, yet so little of it is based on studies involving the perspective of the transgender students.

The adequacy of a research method depends on the purpose of the research and the questions asked (Seidman, 2013). In-depth phenomenologically based interviewing combines life-story interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing

informed by assumptions drawn from phenomenology³. According to the author, interviews use primarily but not exclusively open-ended questions in this approach.

At a certain level, phenomenology interviews create a sense of uncertainty in me. Using an approach from positivism or other trends requires finding a way to innovate those approaches. The decolonial approach demands avoiding such structuralism.

In this respect, some of Seidman's procedures seem to be pertinent to my process: "Besides focusing on human experience and its meaning, phenomenology stresses the transitory natural human experience and emphasizes that human lives are bounded by the time and that human experiences are fleeting." (pp. 16-17). In other words, in human experience, the "will be" becomes the "is" and then the "was" become an instant. So, what is most important to the phenomenological perspective is also inherently problematic in asking participants to reconstruct and reflect on their experience. Using the phenomenological approach, the researchers ask participants to search again for the essence of their lived experience but..., how could this process be less invasive?

Innovating the methodology mentioned above would be pertinent to my proposal. It will be very interesting to see not only how my research participant will have a factual resource to analyze her past, contrast it with the present, and perhaps shape their future, but overall, I emphasize that we will be co-constructing the procedures of this research.

As indicated earlier, the phenomenological theory emphasizes exploring the meaning of peoples' experiences in the context of their lives. The Seidman model proposes "in-depth phenomenological interviewing," which involves conducting three separate interviews. Besides innovating this methodology, I propose a hybridization approach apart from following the steps mentioned before. During the interviews, the participants will draw their learning experiences in a picture, aiming towards consolidating the whole experience in a big book.

Previous experiences with practitioner teachers have shown me that Big Books represent a spectacular option to work with students. We worked on a project about children's rights and how these rights were sometimes violated, the students were inhibited, but they felt free to paint, and the paper captured not only pictures but feelings and emotions.

3 According to Seidman, phenomenology is a complex philosophy with many facets. There is no single approach to interviewing research that could be called phenomenological. Researchers studying phenomenology might develop various approaches to inquire about what they understand as phenomenological.

In respect, there is online research conducted by Larkham, a nursery teacher, who did a research called *Using Big Books on an Interactive Whiteboard*. She says, “using a ‘big book’ with nursery-aged Pupils enables a whole class group to interact and participate during a story session. It also provides the starting point for discussion and conversation because the illustrations are available for all to view” (2010, p.1).

Therefore, including drawings in the interviewing process will be a wonderful ice-breaking start, reduce the participant’s anxiety, and allow her to reflect on her own storytelling, which will give a gain to the process of innovating Seidman’s methodology. Now I explain the steps in the interviewing process, which I will call encounters. All the encounters will be video and recorded taped.

Encounter One: Focus on Life history. This exercise will demand at least three sessions. In the first session, the interviewer’s task is to put the participant’s experience in context by asking her to tell and draw as much as possible about herself in light of her life up to the present time, for example, asking her (if she agrees), to reconstruct their early experiences in their family (session 1), in their school (session 2), with friends (session 3). The idea of co-construct implies involving her in creating the questions and developing the whole activity; making her feel comfortable will dissipate the sense of being objectified, which is the main goal of the innovating methodology proposed by Seidman.

Encounter Two: The details of experience. As with the previous activity, this encounter will be divided into three sessions. The purpose of this second encounter is to concentrate on the concrete details of the participant’s learning experiences; asking her to reconstruct the pictures with details will not ask for opinions but rather the details of the experience, upon which their options may be built to elicit details. The innovation here will consist of analyzing and talking about each picture taken, trying to recall the experience, going beyond, and reflecting upon the told. Seeing and reflecting on her pictures may give her a different perspective on situations and learnings.

Encounter Three: Reflection on the Meaning. In the third moment, Seidman suggests asking participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience. The question of “meaning” is not one of satisfaction or reward, although such issues may affect the participants’ thinking. Instead, it addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ work and life. The twist here will be imagining the future; making sense or meaning requires that the participant looks at how the factors in her life interacted to bring them to the present situation and a future that would come next. A way to shape the future is by imagining it.

It also requires that she look at their present experience in detail and within the context in which it occurs. Exploring the past to clarify the events that led the participant to where she is now and describing the concrete details of the present experience establishes conditions for reflecting upon what she is doing in her life.

Even though it is in the third session, the focus is on the participant's understanding of her experience; through all three encounters, my participant is making meaning. The very process of putting picture experiences into words is a meaning-making process (Vygotsky, 1987). When participants are asked to tell stories of their experience, they are expected to frame some aspects of it with a beginning, a middle, and a future, that will provide the exercise a real meaning. This process will give us surprising findings; the uncertainty is an open door; we do not know where the path is going.

Finally, my role in the process will be the least invasive possible, just a guide, provider of the materials, being always kind, in disposition, and a good listener. Today, the biggest uncertainty is the current situation with Coronavirus, the methodology is planned, but maybe we will have to change, re-adapt, or simply innovate the proposed. The important thing is my friend, student, and participant have the best attitude towards the culmination of this work. I will always thank her for her dedication, professionalism, and good attitude.

The Not Yet

The three learnings of this methodological approach lead me towards filling the existing gap regarding the recognition or visibility of transgender students in the academic field:

First, the decolonial perspective is the path to trace back what has been erased about gender variabilities existing before we were colonized; because of this, it is evident transgender students are not existent in academic scenarios. Analyzing my participant learning experiences will be a starting point to co-construct the unknown transgender students' identities, all in terms of making them visible.

Second, Decoloniality is an invitation towards the innovation of canonical procedures, which tend to consider individual-like objects to be used only to get data. This uncertainty chapter allowed me to recognize my participation as a subject "in whom" I recognize otherness, intersubjectivity, alterity, and sameness.

Third, learning about Decoloniality has taught me how we have been colonized through power, knowledge, and the being. Thus, changing the critical paradigms, innovating, unlearning, and learning with new perspectives is necessary to avoid falling into the vicious circle of replicating models.

References

- Amundson, R. (1983). The epistemological status of naturalized epistemology. *Inquiry-an Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 26(3), 333-344.
- Bakhtin, M. ., Zavala, I., Bubnova, T., & Ponzio, A. (1998). Towards a philosophy of ethics. Of drafts and other writings (1st ed.). Anthropos.
- Bubnova, T. (1997). The ethical principle as the foundation of dialogism in Mikhail Bakhtin. writings. *Journal of the Center for Language Sciences*,15-16, 259-273.
- Ferrarotti, F. (1981) On the autonomy of the biographical method. In d. Bertaux (Ed.), *Biography and society. The life history approach in the social sciences* (pp. 19 -279). Sage.
- Heron, J. (1981). The philosophical basis for a new paradigm. In P. Reason. & Rowan J. (Eds.), *Human inquiry* (pp. 19-35). Wiley.
- Larkham, M. (2010). *Using Big Books on an Interactive Whiteboard*. <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/4847421/U-sing-Big-Books-on-an-Interactive-Whiteboard>, <http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/beginning7.html>
- Levinas, E. (2000). *Ethics and infinity*. (2nd ed). Antonio Machado.
- Lugones, M. (2008). *Coloniality and Gender*. Tabula Rasa. (pp. 75-101) Bogotá.
- Medina, G. (2009, March 9-11). Critical interculturality and intercultural education. Article of the Paper presented at the Seminar “*Interculturality and Intercultural Education*”, organized by the International Integration Institute of the Andrés Bello Agreement, the Peace.
- Mignolo, W. (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Duke University Press.
- Patino, V. (1993). “History of Material Culture in Equinoctial America” (Vol. VII) “*Erotic life & Hygienic Customs*” Caro y Cuervo Institute.
- Reason, P. (1981). Methodological approaches to social science. In P. Reason & J. Rowan (Eds.), *Human Inquiry* (pp. 43-51). Wiley.
- Schatzky, T. (2001). *The site of the Social*. The Pennsylvania state University Press.
- Schutz, A. (1967). *The phenomenology of the social world*. Northwestern University Press.
- Seidman, I. (2013). Interviewing as qualitative research: *A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers College Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (1987). *Thought and Language*. MIT Press.
- Walsh, C. (2009). Interculturality, State, Society. *Tabula Rasa*, 9, 131-152. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/tara/n9/n9a09.pdf>

Methodological Jigsaw: Out and in the Frames¹

Yeraldine Aldana Gutiérrez

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

Introduction

¿Quién eres? Who am I? These questions appeared in my life since secondary education due to situations I consider structural and symbolic violence too. These have inspired me to connect my life experiences to research. To introduce this chapter, I must explicitly acknowledge the life-driven positions from which this study has emerged and developed. I feel like a *mestiza* English language teacher educator who identifies as a bilingual woman and a resilient doctoral student (Aldana, 2020). This positioning has constituted an important source of knowledge inspired or derived from my life experiences to inform research or methodological decisions. This manuscript attempts to share and problematize them beyond *transmitting* these methodological and conceptual possible impossibilities (Aldana, 2021a).

Notwithstanding, research processes are sometimes presented as disconnected from our lives and ourselves; they may occur in our everyday life. Since I could understand it while studying for my Bachelor, I have developed a solid connection to the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (UDFJC). In this second home, I learned how to do research differently from some instrumental stances I got familiar with in high school. I could hear others' voices about the qualitative approach beyond the scientific method and its tendency "to prove assertions and test hypotheses." These experiences constitute an important basis for the problematizing attitude regarding methodological decisions here.

Further doors opened in Applied Linguistics (AL) to inspire this reflexivity. One was in my Master's studies, where I realized again that instrumental viewpoints inside AL endured, but there were also possibilities to challenge them. Materials development, critical bilingualism viewpoints, and complexity in AL

1 This chapter derives from the research titled English teachers' experiences in peace construction: *turning their "little voices" up*.

were key integrated aspects of that research work. As part of another academic experience as an in-service teacher, I embarked on another journey in the Ph.D. where I focused my attention on Peace Construction (PC) from English Language Teaching (ELT). This decision materialized through articulating family situations related to direct Colombian conflict, the cost to pay when thinking and feeling alternatively (Aldana, 2021c)² in a violent version of our academy, and a project developed with preservice teachers about memory and PC from ELT.

Particularly, diverse links in the current research have been made from an informed eclectic attitude (Navarrete, 2009). I have decided to take in my epistemological positioning. Precisely, I refer to a decolonial stance with critical elements³ in dialogue to avoid purist worldviews. These two complementary perspectives respond to instrumentalizing discourses that deny the possibility of being and doing from alternative manners to make sense of our realities, such as those dealing with the articulation between PC and ELT, as in this study. This suggests decoloniality constitutes multifaceted and dialogical possibilities, which imply diverse ways to vindicate the silenced voices of those in a nonbeing zone (Fanon, 2009). Critical perspectives can support this agency when addressing and challenging power uses and abuses in our societies. As long as we can address and relate to others in our research concerning their multiple humanity and life, this epistemological synergy is possible and socially just.

Both epistemological positionings allow us to connect PC and ELT as part of life rather than something aside from it. English teachers and students live and have multiple experiences in and behind them, even when diverse coloniality (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007) may make them invisible. Language possibilities, including English, mediate and are constitutive to humans' realities in terms of peace or violent experiences. The English language may serve the purposes of peace (Kruger, 2012) or even different types of violence (Galtung, 2016) through interpersonal relationships. This reflects a critical moment in AL where language is not only a linguistic communication system, and its teaching is not its mere transmission.

To weave methodological decisions otherwise in this research, I first contextualize the reader in terms of the research articulated in this methodological proposal. Secondly, I focus readers' attention on three learnings and knowledge from this methodological proposal, considering their particular components. Later, gaps in the methodological decisions appear based on this experience in

2 This idea was a key assumption for this methodological proposal from this research reflexivity in both the problematization and the first version of methodological tensions (pp. 2-3) of this study.

3 This epistemological positioning was discussed in Ph.D. class presentations, particularly a text about my epistemological positioning, consolidated in 2019-I.

the present study. They are discussed as an invitation to keep reshaping our methodological research decisions beyond the recipes-driven discourse.

I use a jigsaw puzzle metaphor to represent methodological decisions in this text. This new metaphor in this research may signify the challenging reflexivity of problematizing research methodology that has returned to teachers collaborating with this study and me our right to create knowledge. As part of my experiences in this Ph. D., that first submission about “methodological tensions in 2019” constituted relevant background for the present discussion, contributing to the field and displaying a self-transformation. Reflections on methodology during 2019 and their first written version are re-incorporated here.

The First Jigsaw Piece

To understand the thought and felt “how” behind this research or what we refer to as the “research methodology” in mainstream perspectives, we need to specify what this research looks into. Peace construction has been an issue in Colombia since about 50 years ago, and diverse institutions have tackled it, including the educational one, despite social leaders’ forced disappearance, symbolically and physically speaking⁴, among whom there are teachers, as some educators express and react to⁵.

When problematizing the challenged link between PC and ELT, I noticed English language teachers might differently live peace construction through their proposals invisible by *modern peace frames* (Aldana, 2021b). These refer to an instrumental and objectifying manner to homogenize both PC and English teachers’ knowledge, beings, and pedagogical practices (Aldana, 2021b; Fontan, 2013), perpetuated through diverse coloniality. Interactions with other English teachers who have developed proposals on that connection and the exploration of formal and informal documents have made that problem visible to me. This manifests through problematic facts I call amalgams –from my pedagogical discourses– that articulate theoretical and empirical referents. These, in turn, point to enactment and contestation by English language teachers who seem to be denied the possibility of existing outside modern peace discourses (e.g., good practices for peace construction in the XXI century). More precisely, English teachers’ experiences, when proposing PC in ELT, remain missing or positioned within a nonbeing zone (Fanon, 2009).

4 The mapping of Colombian leaders murdered: <https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/el-mapa-de-los-lideres-sociales-asesinados-en-colombia-184408>

5 Teachers from the District demonstrations: <https://www.dw.com/es/colombia-magisterio-protesta-contra-asesinatos-de-docentes-yl%C3%ADderes-sociales/a-52474239>

Subsequently, a personal, academic, and geopolitical interest emerges through a research question as an inner movement, which springs from the problematization. This question appears as a fracturing concern and curiosity around English language teachers' invisibilized experiences throughout PC in ELT. Approaching it may allow other teachers participating here and me to "co-understand" how we have lived PC from and throughout pedagogical proposals, construction, sharing, and even development. It means this research, decolonial doing (Ortiz & Arias, 2019), or this personal and collective commitment would not follow a unidirectional extractivist procedure to collect information but a self and reciprocal effort to understand each other's experiences differently.

I will refer to other ideas underlying "English teachers' experiences" to deepen this proposal's interest. First, the concept about *English teachers'* does not suggest a homogenizing and even less an already known and defined concept, but a diverse social group whose members might not only constitute themselves as peace instructors but as something else through their experiences, including those that remain silent. These are complex and explain how English teachers may be more than a discipline. These teachers' experiences may involve thoughts and local knowledge, their bodies that embrace their emotions and spiritualities emerging throughout PC in ELT, among other phenomena we cannot even foresee. Suffering, tensions, struggles, fears, prayers, wishes, victories, frustrations, and other emotional and spiritual phenomena are part of what we can explore through "experiences" in the present research.

Jigsaw Pieces Together! But Some Are Missing...

Life is a jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing

Anonymous

In this section, I discuss three learnings and insights from this research methodology as the product of epistemological (how may we relate to knowledge?) and ontological (who am I? Who is the other in this research?) reflexivity plus three underexplored methodological research topics derived and related to those learnings. Thus, I will draw on the first version of this methodological tensions chapter as constituting a preliminary ice-breaking scenario for this project to reflect and propose some contributions to the field concerning how to do research from decolonial positionings with critical elements inserted. Different

class presentations I did during 2019 in my doctoral studies, and especially that first written version of methodological tensions, constitute the background of the present chapter and honest thought felt during the process of connecting diverse methodological possibilities that allowed me to be epistemically and ontologically disobedient. These, in turn, represent both the participants' and my contributions to research methodology when constructing knowledge together by understanding each other's experiences from PC in ELT. Three learnings are explained and narrated as follows.

Initially, the first possible learning understands research as not only an extractivist exercise about hypotheses testing but a space for rethinking ourselves, beyond the canonical researcher as a knower "scientist" and the researched as an "object" under study within hierarchical and dichotomous relationships. This learning supports the idea that both those who develop research and participate in it are also humans who think and feel throughout the research while bringing those thoughts and feelings to these processes. The idea of reconfiguring a multilayered locus of enunciation in this study has let me reflect upon who the other and I are or decide to become based on our particular lives.

Thus, hegemonic objectifying frames in research, positioning us within fixed prescribed roles, could be revisited or complemented by other relational perspectives. Regarding them, teachers in this project and I could care for one another while being and interacting differently towards bidirectional comprehensions and sharing of experiences from PC in ELT. This was one of the most important contributions of the first version of this chapter, where I understood others and myself as humans who are concerned with one another even when doing research, as I deepened on later.

At this point, another idea about research derives from this first learning. Research may also be related to an interpersonal interest and care for one another as a possibly neglected ethical issue. This personal concern appeared as a non-instrumental decision in the first semester of 2019 when one teacher participating in this project expressed in one of our encounters that she was worried about my health due to my high stress levels. I realized it was not a comment to overlook in our conversation about her PC experiences. It inspired me to mark this "caring for the other" as a human being because interacting for not merely instrumental goals leads to a permanent rapport based on interpersonal *empathy*. Interaction for research purposes could revisit the cold extractivist communication processes supported by a consent form, symbolizing objective, trustworthy, and "good" research. As a possible alternative, these methodological decisions could embrace the warm and reciprocal concern we can feel throughout our research good living.

Based on the “mutual care as humans” in that first learning, this research has proposed and considered Vasilachis’ (2009) distinction between the knowers and the known subjects to discuss the opportunity for researchers and participants to transform and play these roles without restriction. Reconceptualizing research triggers the idea that both English teachers participating in this project and I could play both roles simultaneously, keeping a horizontal and cooperative relationship to harvest data (experiences) as knowledge rather than mining them. During the presentations I developed in 2019 and the written background of this text, I have insisted on the possibility of sharing power in research through that dynamic roles-driven strategy but mainly supported by a transparent and humble attitude. Researchers could take off the supremacy and prestige-based role of superior thinkers to accept participants or known subjects and generate relevant knowledges to be recognized rather than simply and strategically used for the researcher’s interests and benefits.

That is why I point out, as a contribution to this project and a second learning here, what I shared in 2019 and explained more within the first version of this chapter: the alternative of pursuing a kind of weaving and weaved methodology rather than a prescriptive one. For that purpose, the methodology concept in this learning is re-signified as a living process that can be transformed instead of an already formulated procedure through prescribed, static, or fixed decisions. On the contrary, it results from the dynamics and complexity of human life. The prefix –co before the verb from the general objective in this study suggests research as a collective and cooperative effort in double hermeneutics (Vasilachis, 2009) that could reinvent research processes. This means I do not aim at creating methodological universals to apply wherever and whoever with, but rather to allow some room for dialoguing reflexivities about research articulated to humans’ lives.

I feel identified with the idea that research might constitute the practice and process designed for, from, and linked to life projects, as Puentes (2015) argues when referring to the “Buen Vivir” indigenous epistemological principle. Addressing English teachers’ experiences, which involve situations where their voices have disappeared due to colonial mechanisms in multiple life scenarios, lets me advocate a re-humanizing methodology that does not necessarily center the human beings but supports an intersubjective dialogue. It would take place concerning what surrounds and across English teachers’ real and concrete bodies intersected with other ways of existence (Walsh, 2015).

In this manner, extractivist practices can also be challenged, based on this second learning, through the cooperative effort for re-humanizing methodological decisions made together for possibly “non-dehumanizing” research (Ocaña *et al.*, 2018). This is why interaction possibilities in this proposal transform

throughout the development of this project with known subjects who have the right and capacities to express their perceptions and experiences not only about PC but also on the processes and procedures in this project, e.g., they suggest interaction alternatives in each encounter; or they decide on the nicknames to identify themselves in this study, as I explained in the background of this chapter. Particularly, this learning and methodological decision emerged from interaction with some known subjects who seemed uncomfortable with instrumental and distant labels assigned to them in research and pedagogical contexts that place them within a passive possibility of existing. From that moment, we perceive how known subjects (English teachers collaborating here) also started contributing to these proposal methodological decisions as knowers.

Connecting the first and second learnings, constructing an ongoing methodology becomes consistent and relevant for cognitively and socially just research (Sousa, 2018). This seems attainable when transforming the possibly inherited attitudinal roots that place us within a peripheral area to be told how to be and do for fulfilling different actions, such as “research” in ELT. An alternative attitude seems to lead us to an –everlasting– epistemological reflexivity and evolving criticality as guides for selecting appropriate tools from the box (Vasilachis, 2009) and tackling what emerges throughout the research as a collective and acknowledged effort instead of a one-way advantageous process. In other words, I referred to a pair of learnings that entail an important assumption dealing with a transformed “how” behind qualitative research. This *how* may not constitute a prescribed set of instrumental decisions which are not even chosen by ourselves as possible teacher-researchers or educators, much as a recipe-driven inquiry discourse has been naturalized. In contrast, this project suggests a “how-who-why” attitude supporting the use of toolboxes towards the possibility of opening them and using “this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner to produce a short-circuit”⁶ (Foucault, 1975, par. 16, as cited in Morris & Patton, 1979).

When I first accounted for that alive and less rigid methodology, I wrote about these decisions and tensions from toolboxes taken from “a field of possible uncertainties”⁷ I enjoy being in nowadays. This is because re-locating myself within the bricoleur role and sharing power in research with English teachers collaborating in this study makes me feel peace of mind. A more horizontal

6 This is the translation of the direct text: Si les gens veulent bien ouvrir les, se servir de telle phrase, telle idée, telle analyse comme d’un tournevis ou d’un desserre-boulon pour court-circuiter...

7 In the first methodological tensions chapter, pages 10-12 explain what I referred to when proposing *uncertainties* in methodological decisions as part of the most relevant contribution, enriched by known subjects and knowers.

(heterarchical) relationship became a target since power might not be the problem in social scenarios that present inequalities (from everyday life, such as the academic ones, and then in research processes), but how we use it. An important assumption behind it is the resignification of the word: “participants” as knowers and known subjects whose active and relational role within this research supports our suspicious minds to address and approach our worlds and ourselves there. Hence, these uncertainties inside methodological decisions are neither complete nor universal. Each particular research study can differently transform and contribute to them in an effort beyond the instrumental recipes-driven discourse, which resembles more a fill-in-the-gaps procedure that places teachers within a passive role.

In this field of uncertainties, we can consider and acknowledge what we have learned about research methodology by putting it into an informed and eclectic (Navarrete, 2009) rather than a capricious dialogue with alternative perspectives. This means a field of uncertainties is not grounded in an exclusionary and denying basis but a pluriverse where resignifying certain taken-for-granted methodological concepts and options seems possible. This is even more likely when we can articulate our research methodologies to a “how-who-why” attitude and account for it from our personal and lived transformation in our beings. Hence, methodological decisions in uncertainties can remain due to the political dimension involved. Therefore, the field of uncertainties does not imply a denial of our previous selves, but a connection between them and our renewed and re-oxygenated bodies with the learned, unlearned, and relearned knowledges resignified.

Even when the qualitative, inductive, and interpretive approach as defined by mainstream authors in educational research may have an impact on how I understand this proposal methodology from a qualitative lens, interactions with known subjects and knowers have inspired me to problematize the white colonizing dimensions of it, mainly directed towards a naturalized rational methodology, as asserted by Ortiz and Arias (2019). There, canonical hierarchies and distance between subject-objects remain⁸. In so doing, I have reflected upon ontological and ethical assumptions behind this research proposal to possibly respond to hybrid realities where English teachers’ complex experiences occur and may contribute to collectively created procedures or processes for interacting within a relational possibility.

In this project, I would like to re-signify the qualitative interpretive approach as an “intuitive methodology otherwise”, which can be constructed and

8 This is inspired by the background version of this chapter and directly taken from the project paper (p. 13-14).

reconstructed in the development of the study through intersubjective dialogues. Considering Walsh (2015), Ocaña *et al.* (2018), and my beliefs as a mestiza teacher-researcher, it is possible to think about research from a *different* locus where interactions with English teachers as known subjects and knowers may not only produce knowledge to approach research questions but also the path to arrive at them. This interest does not look for denial of what has been done so far in research theory, but one epistemological and ontological assumption about possibilities of doing and sounding differently when approaching invisible experiences. Here, I bet on an ongoing methodology to guide interactions with others as human beings. Prescribed fixed decisions are not part of the plan because they transform while developing our interactions, according to how, what, and why we particularly want to re-signify our experiences. This implies integrated epistemological and ontological assumptions about creating a methodological proposal transformed throughout the process and consolidated inductively at the end of this project.

On the other hand, a third broad learning also comes from the permanent reflexivity behind the construction of this project, and it challenges the communication alternatives privileged by the modern paradigm, even for research purposes. Despite the natural and human worlds being linked together, mirroring several communication practices and options, the modern literate white man only attributes high value to the alphanumeric signs. That can be illustrated through books, articles, and even academic presentations, at least in the ELT field, which rely on the linguistic sign as the naturalized possibility to propose and share research. The linguistic movement has colonized the multiple options to (re)signify the world so that images are sometimes considered noisy data in academic journals and event presentations, as three participants of this project and I have experienced. It may reflect a subtle reminder of the ELT field of colonialism where the drawn and body images to signify the world and our experiences seem drastically replaced by letters and later printed ones.

With this, I am not referring to a radical position from which we should only employ or consider one or the other communication possibility to interact with others in inquiry. In contrast, I value the linguistic option and visual or other communication alternatives in research. Becoming sensitive to the everlasting possibilities to signify and re-signify teachers' and my experiences in PC from ELT has constituted an important part of this learning. This is because a complementary relationship among multiple and diverse modes of communication seems to represent other types of interaction to harvest data as knowledges springs from our experiences in the form of collective and uncertain multimodal constructions (Kress, 2010).

Precisely, when thinking about interactions with others as known subjects and knowers from the problematization stage, language constituted something more than the code per se, and thus it gets broader to include any resource for producing and reproducing those various types of worlds (Vasilachis, 2009) humans live in and create. More room for “another” (Mignolo, 2003, p. 217) modes of signifying them in research deserves attention, as proposed in this project. These possibly ignored language resources for interacting with the other in research include colors, shapes, movements, (re)location of material objects, sounds, images in photos, pictures or drawings, and various additional semiotic resources that may constitute what we can identify as multimodality (Kress, 2010). This one in turn also extends to the articulation between signs, societies, and people with political and sociocultural positions that allow them to re-signify their realities within particular social and cultural contexts, as part of social semiotics (Kress, 2010).

This suggests and urges us to rethink the text concept as one that involves a myriad of signs integrated without friction or constraint to re-signify our lifeworld experiences. Uncertain methodological decisions related to interaction possibilities in this research may employ and acknowledge these (social) semiotic convergences that could respond to our co-understanding, as stated in the general aim of this project, from an intersubjective basis.

Additionally, since this methodological field of uncertainties involved teachers’ experiences in PC from ELT pedagogical proposals as a focus for interacting, teachers collaborating and I have shared them by showing resources already developed in our pedagogical proposals or even drawing on additional supporting tools to re-elaborate meanings and complement our interactions as interlocutors. Those resources could overlap or differ from those mentioned above as long as we find it relevant to communicate our questions, answers, doubts, silences, suggestions, and reactions... In this manner, these interactions are not reduced to alphanumeric possibilities. Still, they open the floor for diverse modes of communication that can be selected both before each interaction or in situ.

The first time I presented methodological ideas about solving that collective interest behind the research objective in October of 2019, I referred to a methodological tension in using multimodal interviews or multimodal narratives. Nevertheless, evolving criticality afterward made me realize that methodological decisions do not correspond to that black-and-white attitude. Therefore, I returned to the interactions with teachers collaborating in this study during the problematization, while also exploring how other English teachers have proposed their methodological decisions in research about PC in ELT. As a result, a *field of uncertainties* in the background of this text emerged as a proposal to

illustrate both a possible way of devising interactional strategies to build up a rapport with other humans and an inner state of thoughts and feelings to construct knowledges. Considering some ideas from all the previous sources to juggle them allowed me to experience an out-and-in⁹ the frames move in this field of uncertainties and weave this project's interaction possibilities to relate to each other while co-understanding our experiences.

Keeping the narrative tone in this chapter, it was in the first semester of 2020¹⁰ in my Ph.D. studies that another idea emerged from the field of uncertainties to refer to and continue the construction of this everlasting or ongoing methodology. It was another way to talk about that interaction between the teachers collaborating here and me that could be characterized by the multimodal tenet above. Since reciprocal rapport and human contact suggest interpersonal interactions, the concept of *encounters* emerged in this study as a tool from the available boxes. This one allowed me to link and reflect on the how-who-why regarding the where and when to interact with the other known subjects and knowers in this study. Through encounters, interpersonal contact with known subjects and knowers could be explained and devised concerning "the 'with whom' and 'from where' questions that bring to the fore the importance of relationality" (Walsh, 2015, p. 16).

Pursuing the social link or liaison in its diverse manifestations seems a deep and robust move for interacting. This means social contact and rapport with real humans inside social and cultural encounters, as discussed in ELT literature, may constitute an inner force that urges people to interact. This suggests communication in research processes does not necessarily equal rapport between humans. Therefore, I started considering the interaction with known subjects and knowers as a social or human contact when we encounter. As it occurs in humans' everyday life, encounters in this project can be supported by multiple communication media and language use in analogous or virtual scenarios, or even both. At this point, *encounters* as a methodological possibility let me account for an alternative resource to harvest data and generate knowledge from experiences, keeping a relational connection with the uncertain nature of EL teachers' lives.

The concept of *encounter* appears in different sources within critical and decolonial perspectives. On the one hand, critical encounters appear as "both a live dialogue and a confrontation that we can carry out a posteriori" (Genel &

9 This is the title of the first written version and then the background of this chapter.

10 On February 26th, I presented a transformed locus, a restated interest in experiences, and some methodological assumptions in which other layers were recognized. On April 22nd, the first version of the overall research project with this methodological proposal was also devised.

Deranty, 2016, p. 18). Thus, dialoguing may involve both continuities and discontinuities to produce diverse types of knowledge. On the other hand, Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007), based on Levinas, suggest that encounters with others may allow our subjectivities to shape and reshape. Subsequently, encounters can be described as political scenarios where political positions emerge since unequally constituted knowledge(s) and wisdoms meet, concur, and interact. In any case, generating familiar and affectively comfortable encounters for known subjects and knowers to express our experiences is key.

Another aspect to complement the idea that encounters could be characterized by being multimodal in previous paragraphs involves the bilingual use of language during these interactions. Interestingly, conversations with participants as known subjects and knowers throughout the problematization let me identify the importance they attributed to both English and Spanish when referring to their experiences in PC from ELT. This situation shed light on both bilingual and even plurilingual potentialities to acknowledge, as part of these *multimodal encounters*, where teachers as known subjects and knowers also constitute themselves using the language they choose to express themselves. Using those languages and others are also welcomed due to the multimodal dimension of encounters because languages represent social and semiotic resources. Consequently, multimodal encounters involve and recognize bilingual practices performed throughout them in which the linguistic sign is relevant, but not the only one to (re)signify our experiences, as also highlighted in the background of this updated version.

From this research proposal, re-signifying and complementing methodological possibilities and perspectives from multiple toolboxes may constitute another important contribution that connects the three learnings here, from integrating decolonial and critical perspectives. These permanent and everlasting co-constructed methodological decisions with known subjects and knowers are the product of epistemological and ontological reflexivity (Vasilachis, 2009). These choices may respond alternatively to a recipes-driven discourse inside colonial research methodology. The field of uncertainties constitutes a decolonizing space that allows us to propose alternatives. An expectation in this project is thus to achieve a solid methodological position and initiative inductively created until the end of this project, but constituting just one of the multiple options to devise in the field of uncertainties. This jigsaw puzzle is partially finished because other pieces remain hidden in unexpected places while others still need to be designed.

Some Hidden Jigsaw Pieces

An everlasting move in and out of the frames for devising alternatives from a field of uncertainties to a prescribed methodology constitutes a missing piece in

the ELT area. Although there are proposals within the qualitative approach from the critical stances that have attempted to challenge a modern understanding of research, I consider the decolonial project on a *multiple and plural* how is as relevant as still unexplored. This seems an important gap, but I would like to warn explicitly about something: uncertainties, as supported by toolboxes, are created according to the problematization, and they may constitute neither a trendy methodological perspective nor a universal, radical, or rejecting the proposal in regards to what has been done in mainstream research theory. The honest employment of relevant tools from the boxes will make us use and juggle one resource and the other from mainstream or alternative options that will probably allow us to understand an incipient exploration of the uncertainties field as a pluriversal methodological project.

Furthermore, based on my experience, I consider more research is still required about ethical issues in inquiry. Various reflexivity I did during both semesters of 2019 in the Ph.D. was about this methodological proposal. This was re-humanizing for me because I had struggled with methodological rigidity all my life, even in those related to ethical issues that should go beyond the administration of consent forms. I felt incomplete and in debt with people collaborating in my previous research experiences, when only considering ethics in those terms. If others participating in our studies are not precisely manipulable objects from whom we can only extract information, we could propose and devise different options to both approach them to construct pieces of knowledge together during the development of the study and acknowledge their contribution to it, rather than invisibilizing them at the end of the project and get the credit for all what they also contributed to.

What if we revisit procedures and conceptualizations inside utilitarian ethics more concerned with a personal individual benefit at the expense of *disappeared others*? From this project, I proposed in the background of this text inspired by known subjects and knowers that the possibility to explore relational ethics towards the care for one another would contribute to this missing piece. However, there is still much work to do for comprehending it.

Simultaneously, a decision in construction now has to do with the processes and strategies we could include here for knowledges interpretation in decolonial stances integrated into critical ones. Since there is a different way to problematize our realities and co-construct derived knowledges grounded in our interactions with teachers collaborating in this study (multimodal encounters), a new concern on how to make sense of co-constructed knowledges has emerged. To tackle it, we are pursuing a similar horizontality to that one achieved in co-constructing knowledges (data). In this manner, we are pursuing relevance and respect for

each other's voices more than validating rigid theoretical perspectives. At this point, not only one approach to "data analysis" has been considered, but perhaps a combination of different tools or resources, once again, as bricoleurs. Specifically, grounded theory and narrative analysis could support our emerging knowledges interpretation approach.

Lastly, another topic to continue involving refers to the connection between the locus of enunciation and the epistemological positioning of those who do research and their inquiry. Albeit some professors recognize researchers' loci and epistemologies as political decisions from which they develop their work, I consider that a neglected methodological topic in research theory and work is the explicit concern with an ontological, epistemological, and thus experiential background in researchers that transcends their inquiry. Instrumental methodologies may set aside or avoid this discussion for considering our loci and epistemological positioning as a possible bias for research, even when they could connect studies to teacher-researchers beings beyond the common and, at times, only external contextualization of research action.

Concluding to Start

Previous pieces of this jigsaw puzzle already assembled support this research development. Methodologically speaking, they refer to the components of this research we discussed in the first part of this manuscript. Constructing peace and ELT has also served as a dialogical and reflective space to problematize methodological decisions. Horizontal and dynamic possibilities to develop communication and interpersonal strategies toward rapport have chiefly guided this methodological proposal. This one, in turn, is particularly described in the jigsaw puzzle pieces together section. As this is an everlasting or ongoing methodological proposal, some missing pieces remain to articulate. Some are discussed here; however, they are neither the only ones, and even less were nor they found and selected –as dominant research suggests–. Contrastively, we can create, weave, harvest, or construct them. As educators and researchers, this means we can create conceptual and methodological proposals within our inquiry.

References

- Aldana, Y. (2020, November 4-5). Peace construction in ELT as a resilient doctoral student: a pleasing metamorphosis [Guest speaker]. *3rd Training Research Meeting and Seedbeds*, Universidad Minuto de Dios.

- Aldana-Gutiérrez, Y. (2021a). Possible Impossibilities of Peace Construction in ELT: Profiling the Field. *HOW Journal*, 28(1), 141-162. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.28.1.585>
- Aldana-Gutiérrez, Y. (2021b). English teachers' sites in the Diverse lands of Peace. In H. Castañeda-Peña, CH Guerrero-Nieto and P. Méndez-Rivera. *ELT Local Research Agendas II*, 75-102. Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
- Aldana-Gutiérrez, Y. (2021c). Una lectura otra sobre la construcción de paz en la enseñanza del inglés. *Análisis*, 53(98), 1-40. <https://doi.org/10.15332/21459169.6300>
- Castro-Gómez, S., & Grosfoguel, R. (Eds.). (2007). Prologue. The Decolonial Turn. Critical Theory and Heterarquical Thought. In *The Decolonial Turn. Reflections for an Epistemic Diversity beyond Global Capitalism*, 9-23. Century of Man Publishers.
- Fontan, V. (2013). *Descolonización de la paz*. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.
- Galtung, J. (2016). *Violence, cultural, structural, and direct*. Strategy Notebooks, 183, 147-168
- Fanon, F. (2009). *Black skin, white masks*. Akal Editions.
- Genel, K., & Deranty, J. (2016). *Recognition or Disagreement: A Critical Encounter on the Politics of Freedom, Equality, and Identity*. Columbia University Press.
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Routledge.
- Kruger, F. (2012). The role of TESOL in educating for peace. *Journal of Peace Education*, 9(1), 17-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2011.623769>
- Mignolo, W. (2003). *Local stories / global designs. Coloniality, subaltern knowledge, and border thinking*. Akal Editions.
- Navarrete, Z. (2009). Eclecticism in the social sciences. The case of Political Discourse Analysis. In R. Soriano & M. Ávalos (Eds.), *Political Analysis of Discourse: Intellectual Devices in Social Research* (pp. 139-151). Plaza and Valdés editors.
- Ortiz, A, & Arias, M. I. (2019). Do decolonial: disobey the research methodology. *Findings*, 16(31), 147-166. <https://doi.org/10.15332/s1794-3841.2019.0031.06>
- Ortiz-Ocaña, A., Arias-López, M., & Conedo, Z. (2018). Other methodology in social, human, and educational research. Decolonial doing is a decolonized process. *FAIA*, 7(30), 173-200.
- Sousa, B. (2018). *The end of the cognitive empire. The coming of age of epistemologies of the South*. Duke University Press.

- Vasilachis, I. (2009). Los fundamentos ontológicos y epistemológicos de la investigación cualitativa. *Forum Qualitative Social Research (FQSR)*, 10(2), 1-25. <https://ri.conicet.gov.ar/handle/11336/112261>
- Walsh, C. (2015). Decolonial pedagogies walking and asking. Notes to Paulo Freire from AbyaYala, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 34(1), 9-21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2014.991522>

A Hybrid Approach Toward Teacher Identity Research in the Transnational Nexus¹

Liu Yi-Fen (Cecilia Liu) 劉怡芬

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas
Tunghai University

My Current Take on Decoloniality

My decolonial stance lies in Knowledge decolonization – Knowledge is power in the modern era, and coloniality has transformed from hard power to soft power domination through education, knowledge, and research. Couze Venn (2000) critically characterized what constituted modernity through the lens of the Western Canon in his seminal work *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity*. As English language teachers/researchers, we are all controlled by the normalizing power, from public language policies to institutional policies, such as the “hidden” curricula imposed on schools by Ministries of Education as well as the syllabi and materials guided by the hegemonic Common European Framework, which all reproduces the dominant ideology carried from Eurocentric modernity.

My doctoral research centered around transnational teachers’ identities. Language Teacher Identity Research (LTI) is a cross-disciplinary area involving Philosophy, Sociology, Education, etc. My learning, teaching, and research trajectory has taken me to different parts of the world in the past 20 years. I realized that the canon of these academic disciplines had been dominated by prevailing theories and ideas proposed by European and American philosophers, sociologists, and educators. There are various ways we are subjected to power in an academic context, for example, the imposition of a “colonized curricula” with fundamentally Western truth or fact, which seems to have a universal application regardless of location and culture. Learning about the decolonial turn on the concept of identity in the colonial heritage Global South invited me to embark

1 Doctoral thesis title: *Tensions, contradictions, and hybridization of teacher identities in a transnational nexus*

on a journey of epistemological reflexivity (Vasilachis, 2009) by revisiting my roots and reflecting upon epistemological and ontological positionings in my research practice, which leads me to reject universal truth and knowledge colonization by adopting a hybrid approach that links oriental epistemology, western theoretical grounds, and decolonial thinking.

My Interpretation of the Decolonial Approach

My decolonial take focuses on breaking stable relationships and assumptions. De Fina (2013) points out that Language and Identity research has always focused on the stable process until recently. The stable and fixed concepts of place and national identity are stirred up and fragmented by mobility and globalization. In Language Teacher Identity (LTI) research, the big story autobiographical account of stories has always been the dominant and conventional method, in which narratives are elicited through formal research interviews where the researcher plays a dominant role in eliciting information from the participant, who is assigned the submissive role of providing the requested information to contribute to the researcher's work. Hence, the methodology chapter of my doctoral research attempts to shift the paradigm from the big story narrative approach to the small story narrative approach with collaborative, participatory knowledge construction through the active exchange of voices and experiences via daily social communication instruments. The decolonial turn in research implies not being confined by the normative approach; to outgrowing the methodological impositions by exploring the alternative methods and incorporating the excluded subaltern knowledge.

Introduction

If epistemology is the soul of one's research, then every researcher must embark on a soul-searching journey. The experience of studying and teaching in English-speaking countries (England and Australia) and South America (Colombia) has been enriching, adding multiple layers to my teacher identities and expanding my horizons. On the other hand, adjusting to different socially-culturally situated educational contexts also entailed rethinking and reevaluating many cultural logics and modes of teaching and learning natively from my home country. The teacher identity reconstruction process also made me realize that Chinese and Confucian educational philosophies were deeply embedded inside me, which formed the core of my teacher identity. Hence, I decided to be a "feel-thinking" (Fals Borda, 1981) to connect my thinking and feelings with the reasoning in research. Even though I am fully aware of the fact that it will be a lot easier to walk on the beaten path or just go with the flow, the spirit of being a researcher

is to face the challenges and uncertainties and be able to contribute new findings and add more valid arguments to the “customized” truth (Wallerstein, 2005 as cited in Castañeda-Peña, 2020). In this chapter, I will attempt to take the hybrid approach to research by deploying Chinese philosophy and Confucian epistemology of knowledge and action as conceptual apparatuses and then linking it to decolonial turn with under-explored data collection methods to expand the parameters of language teacher research.

The Locus Enunciation of My Research

A marked difference in education traditions and cultural doing results in identity reconstruction and beliefs reassessment, which is difficult to handle but an asset for intercultural dialogue in transitional teaching. I realized that every opportunity of teaching abroad is a process of self-discovery, transformation, and hybridization of teacher identity. Teaching across cultures is not total harmony without conflicts. However, being out of one’s element in an unfamiliar foreign teaching context has made me see more clearly who I am as a teacher. As an educator, the decolonial turn implies not imposing educational traditions and culturally loaded values on learners from another linguistic and cultural background. Teaching abroad, the encounter with the “otherness,” and conflicting educational policies, ideologies, and beliefs presented in different teaching abroad contexts have forced me to re-examine the traditions, core values, and beliefs that formed the foundation of my professional identities. Motivated by my own experience, my research looks into how transnational teachers’ identities have been questioned, challenged, rejected, extended, and hybridized through interactions with the locals when teaching across geographical and cultural boundaries.

Many academics acknowledge that the prevailing canon from the global North is more important and superior without critically questioning its universal application. Grosfoguel (2011) draws a poignant critique of current knowledge production that gives privilege predominantly to Western thinkers (canon) and epistemology and urges the need for anti-systemic politics beyond identity politics, as well as the recognition of the production of alternative knowledge that promotes “diversity” to decolonize Euro-centered modernity, leading to “transmodernity.” The unique quality and contribution I can bring to the doctorate program methodology-wise is linking/fusing my oriental educational tradition with Western and South perspectives on knowledge construction to counter intellectual colonialism. Transnational teacher-researchers are boundary crossers who cross not only the tangible geographical boundaries but also the intangible epistemological ones. Researching the hybridization of teacher identity also drives me to think about researcher identity. Are researchers confined to monolithic

epistemology? Can we connect the dichotomous North versus South and West versus East ontological and epistemological distinctions raised by paradigmatic purists? Can we take the plural perspectives or a more hybrid research approach?

The discourses in TESOL in Latin America seem centered around decolonial and postcolonial perspectives. Even though the decolonial movement is being embraced and advocated in research, colonial traits such as imposition, oppression, injustice, discrimination, power inequalities, exclusion, and silence seem to have been deeply rooted in EFL teaching practices and programs (López-Calvo, 2016, as cited in Castañeda-Trujillo, 2020). In connection to my study, even though Colombian regulations and public language policies seem to be quite foreign-friendly, transnational teachers confront the local subjectivities of “otherness” and work under the dominant social ideologies and group-based power of the host country, their voices/experiences in this country are unknown and opaque. Studies about how transitional teachers’ native identities interact with local students and academic cultures are scarce or nearly non-existent. I cannot help but wonder if foreign teachers have become passive receivers of regulations and ideologies established by national and local educational institutes.

“Transnational teacher’s linguistic, cultural, and social diversities are often viewed as deficits rather than benefits for education in the host country” (Walsh *et al.*, 2013, cited in Soong, 2018, p. 405). For transnational teachers, understanding the normalizing power that shapes the local educational customs, also the social structures that affect students learning behaviors/attitudes, is crucial for their subsequent adaptation. In most outer and expanding circle countries where English is taught as a second/foreign language, foreign teachers are the minority working under the dominant power of national academic culture and local customs in an educational setting. Are their voices, experiences, and cultural logic excluded from the dominant local learning modes, teaching behavior, and beliefs? Ovodova (2020) argues that the discourse of postcolonial turn is represented in the researchers’ attention to marginal practitioners and peripheral identities. My research aims To make transnational teachers’ legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 2001) “visible” through their multiple discourses at work regarding their teacher identity reconstitution through their narratives.

Reinterpreting Confucian Learning Acts in Connection with Transformative Intellectuals

The Classical Chinese philosophy views knowledge (Zhi) and action (xing) as a unity of proximity, “*Knowledge (Zhi)*” was thus seen as a valuable factor, necessarily and inextricably linked to human activities and the implementation of

social practice (*xing*)” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018). Therefore, one’s knowledge is built upon active involvement and relationship with their social practices, which explains why Confucianism seeks participatory and performative knowledge. In this regard, teaching and research are participatory and performative ways of seeking knowledge. In *the Doctrine of the Mean* (chapter 20), Confucius states that the Noble Man reviews the old and learns the new, thickening his character through the valorization of property. It implies careful retrospective and prospective practices. A scholar should cherish his old knowledge while acquiring new through continuous learning and reflection. As Tsai (2014) interprets, “While in what he has not reflected on or anything in what he has reflected on which he has not discriminated, or his discrimination is not clear, he will not intermit his labor” (p. 1479). This notion coincides with the teaching acts brought up by Kumaravadivelu (2003), in which he highlighted the importance of how passive technicians can become transformative intellectuals through continual self-reflection and self-renewal.

In addition, Elliott and Tsai (2008) recite an important doctrine of Confucius “The superior person honors his virtuous nature, and maintains constant inquiry and learning, seeking to carry it out to its breadth and greatness” (p. 573). This view on “virtue,” “constant inquiry and learning,” and “greatness” corresponds to Kumaravadivelu’s (2003) transformative intellectuals, whose multiple roles include teachers, learners, experts, and community activists. Confucius and Kumaravadivelu emphasized the importance of reflexivity in learning and knowledge acquisition. The creation of knowledge is shaped by constant reflexivity on the contexts and relationships between the researcher and the researched. The Confucian ideology of education is “to cultivate people’s virtue and moral character, to give new life to the people, and to do well on ultimate perfection as stated in *The Great Learning*” (Tsai, 2014, p. 1479).

Furthermore, Confucius said, “If the ruler wishes to transform the people and perfect the customs, he must in deeded rely on education” (Xueji I). His teaching implies that a virtuous ruler does not aim at obtaining fame, money, and power. Instead, he sets a role model that exemplifies moral behaviors and desires moral transformation by encouraging self-cultivation through education to make people internalize and demonstrate exemplary moral behaviors. Scholars and researchers are the knowledge providers and rulers in education. It does not matter how knowledgeable and high a political position a scholar has reached; self-collection is a never-ending vital task until his/her ethical values are internalized in self-realization.

One of the significant features of Confucianism is to “infuse politics with morality through the cultivation of the self since learning and morality are the

two axes of Confucius's doctrines. Tan's (2017) interpretation of Confucianism highlights the perspective of the action-orientation of knowledge, where self-cultivation is pivotal in a way that "each individual must consciously cultivate oneself to transform oneself and collectively realize the Way" (p. 4). According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), teachers as transformative intellectuals "strive not only for educational advancement but also personal transformation" (p. 14). In this sense, Confucius's doctrine parallels Kumaravadivelu's view that transformative intellectuals are socio-politically conscious and act upon it assertively. Cheng (2003) explains that in Chinese philosophy, the proximity between knowledge and action is seen as the proximity between an individual and the world because the action is a means for his/her self-transformation and the transformation of the world in the world. And from the Neo-Confucian perspective, "merely abstract knowledge was useless unless conjoined with ethical self-reflection and cultivation that eventuated in proper moral behavior and social praxis" (Internet Encyclopedia of Philology, 1995). I wonder if Kumaravadivelu ever drew inspiration from Neo-Confucianism. His "conceptualizing teaching acts" seems to have provided the best modern-day interpretation of Confucian education philosophy.

The Relationship is between the Knower and the Known

In Chinese epistemology, the word "know" (Zhi) does not only refer to intellectual awareness but also signifies the importance of knowing the way (dao) - the correct path. The same concept can be applied to carrying out research. Research should be conducted with ethics as the primary concern, not purely extracting information from the participants regardless of moral awareness and the correct path - to act with virtue. Tan (2017) points out that from a Confucian perspective, "learning is a moral endeavor" (p. 4) in which "virtue" is always placed above "knowledge," which affirms that the relationship between knowledge and action is not an instrumental one. In research, virtuous action can be interpreted as not treating the participants as an object of study. Confucius suggested how a man should conduct himself so he can be appreciated everywhere: "Let his words be sincere and truthful, and his actions honorable and careful" (The Analects, Book XVII, Wei-ling-Kung, chapter 5 as cited in Tsai, 2014), which can be employed as code of conduct in research. In a formal research interview, the researcher normally takes the dominant role of asking and eliciting information, whereas the participant is treated as merely the provider of information whose thoughts and knowledge were treated as material objects to benefit the researcher's work.

In addition, the "Confucian view of self is never abstracted from society but always lives in a dynamic relationship to others" (Bary, cited in Tan, 2017, p. 7). This self-other balance encompasses being responsive to the sharable values and

symbolic resources of one's community (Tu, cited in Tan, 2017, p.7). However, being in the shared social and educational context does not mean searching for "commonly shared experience." On the other hand, it is often to acknowledge the differences. As a researcher with a decolonial take, I am fully aware not to essentialize or universalize when interpreting stories my transnational peers tell, as we are unique individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Thus, my current research is not looking for commonalities. Instead, it seeks to explore the different stories of identity conflicts, tensions, and transformation experiences of transnational teachers in Colombia.

"*Sān rén xíng, zé bì yǒu wǒ shī*" is a well-known Confucius saying from the Analects (Lun Yu) about learning. The literal translation is, "I see three people walking down the road; each has something to teach me." It might be a simple phrase, but it has profound wisdom. Initially, it was an implicit piece of advice for governors: rulers should listen to their ministers, even and especially if their views differed from his own. Sometimes, it can be a painful scrutinizing task to take in diverse or contradictory views and try to make sense of them. The implication for research is that researchers should avoid interpreting reality from their angle. No matter how different or opposing the participants' reality might be, researchers need to be impartial learners and reflect upon it carefully before taking a certain course of action. Decolonial thinking is also not imposing one's values and perspectives on the other. One must be humble, observe, and learn from your peers in an organization, community, or nation. Confucius in ancient China used to exchange ideas and dialogue with his disciples, "good teachers often put their students in the role of teacher, allowing them to present their ideas and teach other students, and also the teacher, in the classroom" (Field, 2015, para. 6). Putting it in a research context, good researchers should put their participants in the role of researchers/investigators, which opens a pace that allows dialogue and exchange of ideas for a more inclusive interaction.

In my review, research is also a social practice in a shared community or context; hence, data must be co-constructed. No matter whether the interpretation of the reality experienced by the acting agents (people involved) is similar or different. Sometimes, reality is multifaceted, and it takes different voices to reveal the hidden dimensions. Methodologies such as collaborative autoethnography or narrative analysis (small story) approach emphasize co-tellership. Through the lens of "otherness," the different worldviews, concepts, and attitudes toward education have helped me better understand who I am as a teaching professional. Hence, I would like to adopt this Confucian ontology of self-other balance and relatedness to interpret how or if my fellow transnational teachers of this study go through an identity hybridization process through interacting and relating to

the “otherness” and balancing the self-otherness relation in our shared academic community and social-cultural context.

In research, this Confucian concept of the “dual” cultivation of self and others can be interpreted as the co-construction of the narrative and co-tellership. It goes hand in hand with Watson’s (2007) exploration of the narrative construction of identity. She clearly defines the engagement in “co-construction” of the narrative does not necessarily imply shared meanings “It is often in the acknowledgment of differences, the gap between ourselves and our participants, that analysis gains a purchase” (p. 6). Also, the gaps, differences, and inconsistencies might suggest counter-narratives that can provide alternative findings to the analysis and interpretation. The so-called academic cultural and education system seems to vary a great deal from cultural to cultural and socio-context to socio-context, which also enhances the complexity and challenges of being a teacher-researcher in a transnational zone, where commonly shared values and beliefs about education do not always exist or are not established. I need to be fully aware that my fellow teacher participants are transitional teachers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds; thus, we might not find similar experiences working and interacting with local educational customs in Colombia. On the other hand, having a shared status and identity with my fellow transnational teacher participants will enhance the rapport and trust between me as the researcher and the participants. Also, sharing common ground as an “in-group” member of foreign teachers will minimize my fellow teachers’ pressure to describe conflicts of interest and differential power, thus reducing tensions as they trust me sufficiently to recount their experiences.

Going Beyond the Narrative Convention to a New Narrative Turn

Vásquez (2011) argues that narrative research in TESOL remains very much in its infancy, lagging behind other social science disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, etc. Johnson and Golombek (2011) state that narratives have been used extensively to “engage teachers sense-making processes in their learning and teaching experiences” (p. 487). However, they also point out that extraordinarily little has been done to document how engagement in narrative activities fosters teacher development. This is the gap I am looking to fill in. I want to deploy the perspective of sociolinguistic narrative studies, where the narrative is considered a social practice with an analytic focus on “the contexts in which narratives take place, what they consist of, their performances” (Vásquez, 2011, p. 165). This view also coincides with Confucius’ ideology that knowledge is participatory and performative, drawing upon shared cultural resources for

more inclusive interaction. From this perspective, this new narrative turn is ideal for investigating the transformation of transitional language teachers' identities caused by the changes and shifts in their sociocultural teaching contexts.

Vásquez (2011) emphasized that the predominant approach used to conduct qualitative research has demonstrated the privilege of big autobiographical stories, significantly contributing to the collective understanding of language teaching and learning. On the other hand, she urges the TESOL field to recognize the potential contribution that small sociolinguistic story narrative analysis can make to studying situated social identities of language teachers and learners. In contrast to narrative inquiry (big story approach) with autobiographies, life histories, memoirs, and the big retrospectives elicited from formal research interviews, narrative analysis with stories told in everyday conversational contexts remains rare in the TESOL field (Vásquez, 2011). Ochs and Capps (2009) contend that most of the day-to-day business we communicate with our family, colleagues, and friends look much different from the narratives gathered in a research context. Watson (2007) defines small stories as narratives that emerge from everyday, mundane contexts, which constitute the performance of identities conceived through self-construction and identification. Georgakopoulou (2007) adds that in contrast to the Labovian criteria of personal, past experience stories of non-shared events, small stories can be "telling of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, share (known) events" (p. 146).

As we spend most of our time telling daily realities rather than interviewed life, the small story approach can reflect more truthful sides of "who we are" as language teachers in comparison to coherent and polished accounts of who we are in our teaching career, emerged from the big story approach (Watson, 2007; Vásquez, 2011). Vásquez affirms that because identity is both "contingent" and "relational"; therefore, small stories illuminate "how identity gets negotiated and reconstructed in and through social interaction" (p. 539). Complement this view. I argue that language teachers' identities are not constructed solely by the teachers on their own. Their identities are co-constructed through the interactions with their students, fellow teachers/researchers, the national and institutional language policies, academic cultures, local educational values and beliefs, and many other factors that result in the development, positioning, and negotiation of teacher identity. Because all these factors at stake can change or vary from context to context, uncertainty prompts the dynamic nature of identity. As a result, teachers' identities are not fixed; they can be transformed, reshaped, or repositioned by these variables that come into play.

Shifting From Construction to Co-Construction in Narratives

In our research community, participants are conventionally treated as “objects” from the information is extracted. The researcher is the “knower,” the decision maker, and the interpreter, who leads the data collection, analysis, and interpretation scheme. Georgakopoulou (2007) traced identity research back to recent decades. Her findings showed that narrative inquiry in identity focused on the construction and co-construction of identities came to the foreground at the beginning of the 21st century. Barkhuizen (2011) states narrative inquiry brings storytelling and research together. In the meaning-making and experience-shaping process, which he terms “narrative knowledge,” the researcher and participants listen, live, and construct stories, participating as characters and narrators in narrative research activities. Vásquez (2011) complements his view by commenting on the growing awareness of many narrative genres, where the emphasis on narrative practices and performances is shifting from the construction to the co-construction of identities.

The co-construction and co-tellership concept corresponds with Vasilachis’ (2009) view that new knowledge is being built through the active exchange of voices, experiences, subjectivities, and epistemologies between the researcher and the subjects being researched. She further points out that in participatory co-tellership, participants are the “known subjects” with whom we can learn something and continue to shape our practices as teacher researchers. This dual lens approach enables dialogic engagement with someone encountering similar yet different experiences in a shared social/cultural context. It helps to make sense of the complexities of transnational language teachers’ identity conflicts, negotiation, and reconstruction from an insider’s perspective. Richards’ (1999) study on ESL teachers’ narratives in a professional setting outside the classroom used data that emerged from teachers’ casual chats during work breaks. His study showed that teachers’ shared experiences and concerns reinforced personal and professional relationships, which created a collaborative culture through joint storytelling. He encourages further research to explore the roles and functions of “day-to-day professional stories” (p. 170). Bamberg (2006) argues that the small story is a dialogical and discursive grounded approach that can radically reposition the big story approaches; thus, it enriches traditional narrative inquiry theoretically and methodologically. Therefore, there will be no data collection in my inquiry, but data co-construction; my fellow teachers and I will be co-constructing data on new forms of teacher identity through a more inclusive interaction, exchanging teaching experiences, and sharing different ways of being and belonging in the transitional nexus. This perspective also goes hand in hand with

the Confucian concept of the Way (Dao), which entails the “dual” cultivation of self and others to situate oneself and self-cultivation within a social context and human-relatedness.

Conclusion

In this Methodology chapter, I provided ontological, epistemological and methodological reflections epistemological, theoretical, and methodological reflections concerning my current research, which aims to understand transnational teachers’ identity reconstruction and their process of finding a new sense of belonging in the transitional nexus. To explore this underexplored area in teacher identity research, I intend to employ a hybrid approach that is the dominant system and out of subjection by connecting Chinese philosophy and Confucian epistemology with an emphasis on data co-construction research approaches to justify knowledge claims. It is also in line with the decolonial and postcolonial turns, as Ovodova (2020) points out that “the identities comprehended within the postcolonial approach fix mixture of values and behavior models of their and others’ cultures” (p. 30).

Methodologically speaking, my doctorate research aims to eliminate habitual research optics by adopting narrative knowledge with a narrative analysis (small story) approach. Through small multi-party storytelling and day-to-day naturally occurring informal interactions to examine transnational teachers’ identity inclusion and exclusion in their foreign context in Colombia. This underexplored methodological paradigm breaks away from the canonical framework of TESOL’s big story narrative tradition. It enhances dialogical/discursive co-tellership as well as the multitude of qualitative research on narratives.

In short, this chapter takes on the challenges of uncertainties in ELT research through the decolonial optics by charting out an unconventional path via ontological, epistemological, and methodological reflexivity, endeavoring to shed new light on Language Teacher Identity research with a different perspective and develop new understanding in the field of ELT.

References

- Bamberg, M. (2006) Stories: Big or small: Why do we care? *Narrative inquiry*, 16(1), 139-147.
- Barkhuizen, G. (2011). Narrative knowledging in TESOL. *TESOL quarterly*, 45(3), 391-414.
- Berthrong, J. H. (2023). “Neo-Confucian Philosophy,” by John H. Berthrong, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://iep.utm.edu/>

- Borda, F. Orlando. (1981). *Ciencia Propia y Colonialismo Intelectual* [Own Science and Intellectual Colonialism]. Carlos Valencia Publishers.
- Castañeda-Peña, H. (2020). *Methodological Imprisonment of Research in ELT Education: Exploring Complementary Way-Out. Methodological uncertainties of research in ELT education I* (pp. 37-46). Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
- Castañeda-Trujillo (2020). Untangling Initial English Teaching Education from Pre-Service Teachers' Collaborative Autoethnographies. *Methodological uncertainties of research in ELT education I* (pp. 219-239). Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
- Cheng, C. Y. (2003). Confucianism: Twentieth Century. *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, 160-171.
- Couze, V. (2000). *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity*. Sage.
- De Fina, A. (2013). Top-down and bottom-up strategies of identity construction in ethnic media. *Applied linguistics*, 34(5), 554-573.
- education. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 8(4), 404-414.
- Elliott, J., & Tsai, CT (2008). What might Confucius have to say about action research? *Educational Action Research*, 16(4), 569-578.
- Field, A. D. (2015, November 15). *The Three Ls of Leadership (You Guessed It)*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/three-ls-leadership-you-guessed-andrew-field>
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2007). Thinking big with small stories in narrative and identity analysis. In M. Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative State of the Art* (pp. 145-154). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.6>
- Grosfoguel, R. (2011). Decolonizing post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: Transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality. *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1(1), 1-38.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2011). The transformative power of narrative in second language teacher education. *Tesol Quarterly*, 45(3), 486-509.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). *Beyond methods: Macro strategies for language teaching*. Yale University Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (2001). Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice. In *Supporting lifelong learning* (pp. 121-136). Routledge.
- Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2009). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Harvard University Press.

- Ovodova, S. N. (2020). Human in the World of Transit Culture: The Effect of Decolonial Turn on the Concept of Identity. *KnE Social Sciences*, 28-31.
- Richards, K. (1999). Working towards common understandings: Collaborative interaction in staffroom stories. *Text and Talk*, 19(1), 143-174.
- Rošker, J. (2018, April 5). Epistemology in Chinese Philosophy. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-epistemology/>
- Soong, H. (2018). Transnational teachers in Australian schools: Implications for democratic
- Tan, C. (2017). A Confucian perspective of self-cultivation in learning: Its implications for self-directed learning. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 23(2), 250-262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971417721719>
- The Doctrine of the Mean. (2018, June 8). (A. Charles Muller, Trans.) <http://www.acmuller.net/con-dao/docofmean.html>
- Tsai, C. T. (2014). The Confucian View of the Relationship between Knowledge and Action and Its Relevance to Action Research. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46(13), 1474-1486.
- Vasilachis, I. (2009). The ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative research. *FORUM: Qualitative social research*, 10(2), 1-26.
- Vásquez, C. (2011). TESOL, teacher identity, and the need for “small story” research. *Tesol Quarterly*, 45(3), 535-545.
- Watson, C. (2007). “Small stories”, positioning analysis, and the doing of professional identities in learning to teach. *Narrative Inquiry*, 17(2), 371-389.

About the Authors

Pilar Méndez-Rivera is a Professor and Scholar in the Inter-Institutional Doctorate in Education at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá-Colombia. She has published books and articles in (ELT) teachers' resistance practices, subjectivity and teacher education. Her book "English teacher" subjectivity and English language teaching in Bogotá (in Spanish), coauthored with some colleagues, encompasses the intricate dynamics affecting the exercise of the profession over different time-scales. Here the role of resistance to hegemonic discourses is problematized, while pinpointing spaces for English language teachers' self-government practices. She is the leading researcher of "Intertexto" research group and the current coordinator of the ELT major at the doctoral program.

Harold Castañeda-Peña has a Ph.D. in Education from Goldsmiths, University of London. He coordinates the Inter-Institutional Doctorate in Education at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá-Colombia. His research interests are identity, information literacy, and the use of video gaming in teaching English. He is a member of the "Learning and Information Society" research group.

Carmen Helena Guerrero-Nieto holds a Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching from the University of Arizona. She is affiliated with an Interinstitutional in Education (Interinstitutional Doctorate on Education), ELT Education major, from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. She has published books and articles in critical pedagogy, critical discourse analysis, and teacher education. She is the leading researcher of the Critical Studies on Educational Policies research group and a member of the Learning and Information Society research group. She is the current vice president of the Colombian English Teacher Association ASOCOPI.

Miguel Martínez Luengas has a B.Ed. in Teaching English and a Master's in teaching English as a Foreign Language. He is currently a Ph.D. Candidate

for the Inter-Institutional Doctorate in Education at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, with a major in ELT. He has taught English at the elementary, high school, and university levels for 12 years. His research interests focus on teachers' social practices, subject positioning, professional development, and class observation practices. He is a member of the "Learning and Information Society" research group.

Yeraldine Aldana Gutiérrez has a Bachelor's Degree in teaching English as a foreign language from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, where she co-founded the "Contemporary Interdisciplinary Studies in Computer-Mediated Communication" seedbed. She has a Master's in the Applied Linguistics of Spanish as a foreign language from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. She is studying for an Inter-Institutional Doctorate in English, majoring in ELT, at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Her research interests include peace-building in ELT, bilingualism, multimodal communication, and de-colonial studies.

Mireya Esther Castañeda Usaqué has a B.Ed. in Philology and Languages (English) from the National University of Colombia, an MA in Applied Linguistics to TEFL from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas and a specialization in Educational Management. She is an Inter-Institutional Doctorate in Education student at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. She has taught from kindergarten to university levels and has designed questions for State exams. She coordinates the Bogotá Secretariat of Education (Secretaría de Educación del Distrito – SED). Her research interests focus on English language teaching in public primary schools.

Yi-Fen Cecilia Liu has a Master's in Music from the University of Sussex in the UK, a Master's in Education in TESOL from the University of Sydney, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Chinese-English Translation and Interpreting from Macquarie University in Australia. She has taught languages in Taiwan, England, Australia, and Colombia. She currently works as a full-time lecturer at the English Language Center - Tunghai University while pursuing her Ph.D. in English Language Education (ELT) at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Colombia. Her research interests include comparative educational studies, critical intercultural communication, and language teacher identity.

Pedro Adolfo Cabrejo Ruiz has a Spanish, English, and French BA from the University of La Salle. He is a Fellow of the “Children Rights and School Management Program,” sponsored by the Swedish International Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas Development Agency and Lund’s University in Sweden. He has a Master’s in English Didactics Education from the Universidad Externado de Colombia and is currently studying for a Ph. D. at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. He has taught at different levels for twenty years: preschool, elementary and high school, and university. He is a teacher educator at the Universidad de La Salle and the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. His interests focus on teaching, gender inclusion, and resilience.

Este libro se
terminó de imprimir
en octubre del 2023
en la Editorial UD
Bogotá, Colombia

This book offers a window onto the personal and collective journey(s) towards decolonial inquiry of nine English Language Teaching (ELT) researchers of the South. They share their stories of learning what it means not only to question the historical and ongoing violence of modern institutions of epistemic power (especially schools, universities, and academic disciplines) but to recognize, face, and detangle the roots of coloniality in their ways of knowing, relating and being with/in the profession.

The immensity of this task is enormous. The authors of this book describe it as a process of swimming into “uncharted waters” as they face the complex, unknowable, and uncomfortable necessity of being epistemological and ontologically disobedient not only to professional norms and expectations but to cherished assumptions about knowledge, identity, purpose, truth, and justice.

Sarah Amsler
University of Nottingham

